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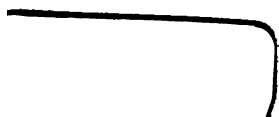
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A. Bronson Alcott

(From a portrait by Mrs. Hildreth in 1852, at the age of fifty-three.)



Abner Alcott

(From a portrait by Mrs. Childreth in 1852, at the age of fifty-three.)

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George Fuller, the celebrated portrait-painter, and will be found described by Mrs. Alcott on page 472 of this biography. Although never an exact portrait, it has been more satisfactory as an ideal representation of an idealist, to many of his friends, than the more literal copies which photography produced at many periods of his long life. One of these photographic portraits, however, is given, because it illustrates the robust old age of Mr. Alcott, when he traversed the Northwestern States in the winter of 1880-1881, holding conversations and instructing audiences in churches, school-houses, universities, and drawing-rooms. It was taken by Boyd, of Des Moines, Iowa, in January, 1881, when Mr. Alcott was in his eighty-second year, and before the vigor of his constitution had been much impaired; and it represents him in travelling costume, and not in the artistic robe selected by Mrs. Hildreth for her sitter. A third portrait appears in the engraving of the Orchard House and School of Philosophy, which is prefixed to Dr. Harris's chapter upon Alcott, the Philosopher. This was taken in the summer of 1880. A later photograph, representing Mr. Alcott, with others, near the Orchard House, is in existence, but has never been en-



ancestors of the two branches of the family in this country were Thomas Alcocke, from whom the New Haven branch descended; and George Alcocke, whose son, Dr. John Alcocke, settled in Roxbury, Mass., while his uncle Thomas was of Boston and Dedham, Mass. Philip Alcocke, the son of Thomas, removed to New Haven, Conn., with his mother, Margery, who, after her first husband's death in 1657, married John Benham of New Haven, and there died in 1660, leaving two sons, Philip and John, and several daughters (all of the first marriage), one of whom, marrying John Robinson, became the grandmother of Jonathan Trumbull, the famous Governor of Connecticut, — "Brother Jonathan," — and of John Trumbull, the painter. Philip Alcocke's aunt was a sister of Rev. Thomas Hooker of the Hartford Colony; his mother, Margery, whose maiden name I have not heard, is described by Rev. John Davenport in a letter to John Winthrop, Jr., as "good and sweet-spirited," — terms which will apply to many of her descendants, and particularly to Bronson Alcott. The two brothers, Thomas and George, came over with the elder Winthrop in 1630; they were persons of substance, and doubtless were of the same English family as the famous John Alcocke, Bishop of Ely, who flourished in the civil wars of the Roses. Being a celibate priest, of course he was not the ancestor of

honey on Alcocke's memory, commending him for a mortified man, 'given to learning from childhood, growing from grace to grace, so that in his old age were none in England higher for holiness.' Had saintship gone as much by merit as favor, he deserved one as well as his namesake Saint John (of Beverley), his predecessor in the see of Ely."

Are not these the qualities his friends loved in Bronson Alcott? A contemporary of the good Bishop, Alexander Barclay, who passed for a poet, commemorates him thus, in allusion to his name and his heraldic arms, which were three cocks *chantants*:—

"Yes, since those days a cock was in the Fen,
I knew his voice among a thousand men;
He laught, he preacht, he mended every wrong,
But Coridon, alas! no good thing bideth long.
He all ways was a cock, — he wakened us from sleep,
And while we slumberéd he did our foldés keep.
This cock was no more abashéd of a fox
Than is a lion abashéd of an ox.

The mighty walls of Ely Monastery,
The stonés, rocks and tourés semblably,
The marble pillars and images each one
Sweat all for sorrow when this cock was gone."

It is also recorded of Bishop Alcocke that on the first Sunday in 1488 he "did preach a good and gentle sermon in St. Mary's Church at Cambridge,

twelve in all) a farm of more than a hundred acres, and died on his own large farm in 1777. His son, Captain John of Wolcott, was born there in 1731, married in 1755 Mary Chatfield, granddaughter of Rev. Abraham Pierson, first President of Yale College, and had nine children, of whom Joseph Chatfield Alcox was one of the youngest (born in 1771). Captain John received his commission in "the train-band of Farmingbury Winter Parish" (now Wolcott), May 14, 1774, from his remote cousin, Governor Trumbull, and had three sons in the Army of the Revolution, — Samuel, Solomon, and John Blakeslee. He was a farmer, like his father, but less prosperous. His wife was from the town of Derby; and his grandson, in his old age describing the condition of things in 1755, says: —

"At the time of his marriage the country was a wilderness along the Naugatuck to Derby Landing (fifteen miles distant from Spindle Hill), which was then a flourishing trading-place and fishery, situated at the junction of the Naugatuck with the Housatonic. The road along the side of the former was a narrow pathway cut into the banks through a deep gorge, with steep precipices, on both sides clothed with hemlocks, and with tall chestnuts crowning the summits. The road, built thus on the bank of the River, was called the Dug Road, and in places was overshadowed by hemlocks and ivy, darkening the scene and giving it a

opening of the century, fruitful with fields of grain and dotted with orchards, has now become almost one spacious forest, the wood being the most productive crop of the owners."

Near by the modest house of Joseph Alcox stood the schoolhouse "in the fork of the road," where the two cousins, William and Bronson Alcott, received the rudiments of their education. This schoolhouse has now disappeared, and the house and farm of Joseph Alcox have suffered from neglect since his death in 1829. He was a skilful farmer and country mechanic, making farming-tools and household utensils for his townsmen, and having the best tilled and best fenced farm (of nearly a hundred acres) in the Spindle Hill district. Two of his brothers had built log-cabins on their clearings, and lived in them in the early part of this century; but he always occupied a frame house, and lived with comfort, though with frugality. He was a diffident, retiring man, and kept much at home, content with his simple lot, industrious, temperate, conscientious, honorable in all his dealings, and fortunate in his domestic life.

The connection of the Alcotts with the Episcopal Church began with the marriage of Joseph Alcox and Anna Bronson in 1796. Her father, Captain Amos Bronson, for whom she named her first son, had married Anna Blakeslee of Plymouth, the town

"The mild-eyed mother, seasonably wed,
A finer culture brought to these rude parts,
Of sprightly race, considerably bred,
And thus accomplished in all household arts.

"Bold scenery her homestead's view confines;
Beside the meadows green the river glides,
Mount Jericho uplifts his towering pines,
And fruitful orchards crown the steep hillsides.

"Pillioned behind her white-haired patriarch
She often rode, while o'er the saddle swung
The Sunday's luncheon; he, the man of mark,
Read service, sermon, set the tune, and sung.

"Oft his well-mounted dame with homespun roll,
Woven by herself, betwixt the river and hill,
Paced the long distance to the city's goal,
And therewith paid young 'Tilly's' college bill."

It was the earnest wish of Anna Alcox to educate her son where her brother had graduated; but the fortunes of the family did not permit this. Young Amos, like other farmers' boys in New England, was early enlisted in the family labors. He says:—

"I assisted my parents in husbandry and housewifery during my childhood and early youth. From the age of six to ten years, I attended the common school near my father's house, during nine months of the year; and from ten till I was fourteen, during the winter months. Our 'copies' were set by the schoolmaster in books made of a few sheets of foolscap stitched to-

gether, and 'ruled' with a leaden plummet. We used ink made of maple and oak bark, steeped in indigo and alum, which we manufactured ourselves. With this I began keeping a diary of my doings, with some entries of the weather and events, at twelve years of age; it contained also some notice of my reading, and a catalogue of the books read. This diary was continued without interruption, including my experiences while travelling in the Southern States, till the time of my school-keeping in 1825; and had extended to some twelve volumes. But in 1833 it was unfortunately burned in Philadelphia, with my early correspondence and business papers."

In the cross-roads schoolhouse where the two Alcott cousins began their education, hardly anything was as we see it now, even in the ruder parts of the United States. The date being from 1804 to 1812, we have this literal prosaic description of the place from the pen of Dr. William Alcott, writing in 1831:—

"The schoolhouse stood near the centre of the district, at the junction of four roads. The spot was peculiarly exposed to the bleak winds of winter; nor were there any shade-trees near, to shelter the children from the scorching rays of the summer's sun during their recreations. The size of the building was twenty-two feet long by twenty broad. From the floor to the ceiling it was seven feet. The chimney and entry took up about four feet at one end, leaving the schoolroom itself

twenty feet by eighteen. Around the three sides of the room were connected desks, arranged so that when the pupils were sitting at them their faces were towards the instructor and their backs towards the wall. Attached to the sides of the desks nearest to the instructor were benches for small pupils. The instructor's desk and chair occupied the centre. On this desk was stationed a rod or ferrule; sometimes both. These, with books, writings, inkstands, rules, and plummets, with a fire-shovel and a pair of tongs, were the principal furniture. The windows were five in number, of twelve panes each. The entry was four feet square. A depression in the chimney on one side of the entry furnished a place of deposit for the hats and spare clothes of the boys. The girls generally carried their bonnets, etc., into the schoolroom. The ceiling and walls were plastered. The room was warmed by a large and deep fireplace. In severe weather it was estimated that the amount usually consumed was not far from a cord of wood a week. The wood was left in the road near the house, so that it was often buried in the snow or wet with the rain. At the best it was always burnt green. The ventilation of the schoolroom was as much neglected as its temperature; and its cleanliness more than either. In summer the floor was washed once in two or three weeks. Writing and spelling were leading studies every day, and on Saturday the Old Assembly Catechism, in the Congregational order and the Episcopal order, were regularly repeated. Webster's Spelling-Book, the American Preceptor, and the New Testament

were the principal books used. Arithmetic was taught by a few instructors one or two evenings in a week. 'Read as you talk,' was a rule seldom given, and still less frequently reduced to practice. It was customary to read the Testament and Preceptor (the principal reading-books), generally in course. There were, however, certain days of the week on which selected pieces were read. These consisted of an oration, and perhaps a dialogue, with some of the more difficult poetry. When visitors called, they were commonly required to read these selections, which they had learned almost by heart. New beginners in writing usually had a copy of straight marks. Over the top of the next page the master wrote *Avoid alluring company*, in large hand, which the pupil was required to imitate. A page a day — that is, one eighth of a common sheet of foolscap paper — was their task in writing.

"The order of exercises for a day was usually as follows: From 9 A. M. to 9.15, the instructor came to the door with a large ferule, and struck several times on the doorpost as a signal for opening the school. Such pupils as were present came in, and either took their seats or crowded around the fire. Those of the first class who were present read in the Testament. The time allotted to this exercise was from twenty to thirty minutes, or until most of the pupils had arrived. When this exercise closed, writing was attended to. In the winter, copies and pens were to be prepared, ink to be thawed and watered, and numbers wished to go to the fire at once. In the midst of all this the second class

took their Testament for reading. While the second and third classes were reading, the instructor finished copies and pens, and assigned the spelling lessons for the forenoon. Then the smaller classes were to be taught. At about half-past ten the welcome sound 'You may go out,' was heard. Every one made his long 'obeisance,' and was immediately in the street; but in from five to ten minutes the loud rap brought them to the place of obeisance, and ultimately to their seats again. The two sexes went out separately.

"There was a large pond about a quarter of a mile from the schoolhouse. In the winter this was the favorite resort of the boys. Time passed so swiftly that they were often too late at the school, and were reprimanded, sometimes feruled or flogged. The rap on the door summoned them at one. The 'American Preceptor' was then read for nearly half an hour by the first class, and about a quarter of an hour by the second. Writing went on again, simultaneously with the reading of the second and smaller classes.

"When the course of lessons was finished, a short recess was allowed, as in the forenoon. On coming in from recess or intermission, it was customary to have a pail of water and cup stand by the door. It was rarely 'handed around,' but every one helped himself. On coming in from the afternoon recess, the classes were all exercised in their spelling lessons again, beginning with the youngest. After spelling, the pauses, abbreviations, numeral letters, etc., were recited. In addition to these, the instructor usually had a set of

written questions, embracing the time when many remarkable events happened, the various currencies, tables of distance, weight, measure, etc. The first class, and sometimes the second, were required to answer these daily until they were perfectly familiar. The older classes were required to commit the Introduction to the Spelling-Book to memory.

“The exercises of the day were usually closed by calling the roll of pupils, by announcing the name of the scholar whose turn it was to make the fire next morning, and by giving positive orders for every pupil to ‘go straight home, and be civil to everybody he might meet with.’ Once a week the writers were required to write each a line for examination. They were then numbered according to their excellence. He whose line was No. 1 was allowed to have the first choice among the seats; No. 2 the second, and so on. About once a week they were also allowed to choose sides for spelling, which usually took up about half of the afternoon. The side or party who misspelled the smallest number of words was declared to have *beat*; and they usually manifested much triumph.

“This school was equal, if not superior, to the average of the schools in that part of the country. In 1801 the people paid at least one half of the compensation of the instructor, by a tax upon themselves proportioned to the number of pupils furnished by each.”

More briefly, Bronson Alcott, in his “New Connecticut,” gives the same picture in verse:—

"At cross-roads near, the district schoolhouse stood
Disconsolate ; its wide-mouthed chimney-heats,
Fuelled all winter long with soggy wood,
Scarce reached the shivering pupils in their seats.

"All round the room the hacked pine-tables range,
Long seats in front, in corner, dungeon set ;
Master will lessons hear, books interchange,
Mend pens, set copies, point the alphabet.

"On Saturdays forth came, yellow and dim,
New England's Primer ; and the scholars all
Lord's Prayer recite, Commandments, cradle-hymn,
And fatal consequence of Adam's fall."

Of course the few months' instruction at this school in a year could not advance the pupils much in the way of learning, unless they supplemented the school with such reading and private study as these cousins did. Books were few and difficult of access, and there were hardly a hundred volumes in the parish library ; but young Amos got permission to visit on Saturday afternoons the farmhouses in Wolcott and Plymouth for miles around, to examine their collections and read their books. These were the Bible (always), and perhaps half-a-dozen other books, — among them Bunyan's Pilgrim, Hervey's Meditations, Young's Night Thoughts, and Burgh's Dignity of Human Nature, a book then in much vogue among the country people of New England. These vol-

umes would be kept on a shelf in the corner of the family room, and young Alcott readily got leave to borrow them. It was his custom to borrow and read the "Pilgrim's Progress" once a year; and this book, more than any other, gave direction to his fancies and visions of life.

In a short autobiography, not extending beyond the period of the Cheshire school, Mr. Alcott says :

"The books used in my first school were Noah Webster's Spelling Book, Caleb Bingham's American Preceptor, and Dwight's Geography, — the two last used as reading books only. I began keeping a diary of my doings, with some entries of the weather and events, at twelve years old. It contained some notices of my reading and a catalogue of the books read, with a list of my own little library. Among these were Paradise Lost, Robinson Crusoe, and Thomson's Seasons. This diary was continued without interruption, but was burnt, as before mentioned, in 1833, with my early correspondence and juvenile papers. This correspondence began with my nearest neighbor and playmate, William Alcott, who was a year older than myself."

Some fragments only of these early letters remain; in one of them occurs a criticism by Bronson Alcott on a composition by his cousin, without date, but probably about 1824. Some passages follow; and the censures may well apply to the writer's own early style: —

"This period is perspicuous: the collocation and choice of words is judicious, and exhibited to the best advantage. It is distinguished by clearness, unity, and strength. The synonyms are properly applied. The style is nervous, and approaches to neatness. . . . The remainder of the paragraph is objectionable. The first period is verbose; the ideas might have been expressed in fewer words, and the sentence would have been clearer had the affirmation been direct. The commencement of the third sentence is obscure. 'To follow a road' and to 'dare the laws,' are common, but elliptical and inadequate expressions. The next sentence is harsh, and the turn in the sentence is abrupt. The style is loose and feeble. . . . This is a good sentence. It is perspicuous and clear, has unity and strength. The style is neat and nervous. If it be defective, the terms 'ranks and conditions' are too nearly synonymous to be copulatively connected. The next sentence is the worst in the piece. It is too prolix, the arrangement is too clumsy and labored, and the style too diffuse. Contrary to rhetorical rules, figurative and plain language are here jumbled together. The word 'ransack' destroys the harmony of the sentence, — 'search' would have been better. The style of the piece in general is diffuse and plain. No attempt seems to be made in the florid. It is sometimes concise and nervous, and characterized by a degree of strength; sometimes, too, is dry, harsh, and obscure. No errors are discovered in orthography or syntax."

The autobiography goes on to say : —

“ In the autumn of 1813 I lived about two months at Cheshire, twelve miles from Wolcott, with my uncle, Rev. Tillotson Bronson, D.D., assisting as errand boy, and attending the district school [it was this which he afterwards taught and made famous]. I was homesick and soon returned to my father, oppressed by the show of learning, and the demeanor of the students and the company I there encountered.”

At this period there was much discontent in the boy's mind, which his mother knew how to appease. In his diary for September, 1829, appears this passage, —

“ Wrote to my mother. Kind and benignant spirit ! how much I owe thee for all thy influences during the years of infancy and childhood ! How mildly didst thou guide the young current of my feelings, and fill my heart with the sympathies of thine own bosom, pure and generous amid the forms of selfishness and apathy around thee ! ”

In a letter to his mother, written June 6, 1836, from Boston, where he was surrounded by his own children and his pupils, he dwells further on this theme : —

“ My memory lingers fondly about my early home. As years multiply and the cares and duties of life press, the more am I reminded of my early days, when as a

son and brother I dwelt under the same roof with you — and him who has gone hence. In this new relation of father, I seem to be living out his life ; in my children I seem to see myself as a child, fondly delighting in his and your approval. My children, calling for their mother, recall the time when I was wont to come to you, with that beautiful name on my lips, — sure of your smiling upon me and taking me to your heart. And when my little ones need correction, — for what children do not sometimes, even the best? — then I think of my father's earnest manner with me, as I stood before him, perhaps conscience-stricken and acknowledging my fault. I have been trying to remember when you had cause to reprimand or correct me, but I have no such recollection. You are associated in my heart with kindness, forbearance long, sympathy for me ever ; for when others wronged me, it was grateful to have your encouraging look, your approving word. I was diffident, — you never mortified me ; I was quiet, — you never excited me ; I loved my books, — you encouraged me to read, and stored my mind with knowledge. You helped me when I needed help, were glad at any success of mine, never frowned upon me when I failed. You knew my love for neatness of appearance, my sense of the beautiful, — and you cherished it. These things I have not forgotten, and love now to tell you so. I am sure that I owe not a little of my serenity of mind, equanimity of disposition, hope and trust in the future, which is my usual habit, to you. Preachers I have had, teachers a few, trials and vicissitudes, — I have failed

wall or by some tree, while the oxen rested in the furrow.

Besides being a pupil at his uncle's (Dr. Bronson) in 1813, he studied for a time, in 1815, with the minister of the parish, Parson Keys, who was a good scholar and taught pupils from other towns and States, as his predecessor, Rev. Israel Woodward, had done more conspicuously before 1810. The poet Percival, and a less distinguished Virginia poet, William Maxwell, were pupils of Mr. Woodward. Maxwell, in some verses commemorating his teacher and the town of Wolcott, written about 1812, has this passage, imitative of Goldsmith, but not without merit:—

“There Woodward reigned, the genius of the place,
The friend and guardian of the simple race.
And well the pastor led his little flock
Through peaceful meadows to the gushing Rock;
Himself before, lest they should go astray,
His only care to help them on their way,
Fulfil his office and approve his love
To the great Shepherd of the fold above.”

Rev. John Keys, who succeeded Mr. Woodward, was the first Calvinistic minister of whom young Amos had a distinct recollection,—his church associations being with the clergymen and laymen of the Anglican Church. But he went to the “installation” of Parson Keys in 1814, and found it a memorable occasion.

“Rev. Dr. Lyman Beecher, then residing in Litchfield, preached the sermon, and left a lively impression on my memory. His bearing in the pulpit was superbly serious and impressive. His arguments, pointed with emphasis by the spectacles raised or dropped, as he dealt forth his doctrine, thunderous at times, and illuminated by the lightning of his countenance, were in a style of eloquence as unique as it was effective. Besides his part, I remember nothing of the day’s exercises.” Mr. Keys himself, adds Mr. Alcott, “was a faithful servant of the town during his ministry, and while a generation of young men and women were coming forward to take part in its affairs. Up to his time the pursuit had been mainly agriculture; but now new industries had sprung into existence in neighboring towns, and drawn the young people away by the offer of better wages or more agreeable pursuits. Many had chosen to pass the winter months at the South, and on their return brought from there freer manners than the sober citizens deemed respectable, and particularly unbecoming to the gravity of public worship on Sunday. The high pews in the galleries were then wont to be crowded with the gay idolaters, anticipating the evening’s devotions rather than those proper to the sanctuary. If the preacher was earnest in his worship, not less earnest and devout were they in theirs, — even while the gayest appeared to be taking notes of his discourse.”

It was in 1813 that young Amos went with his father for the first time to the city of New Haven,

twenty-three miles south, — gazing wistfully at the buildings of Yale College, and glancing at the book-stores. In the spring of 1814 he went to work at the clock factory of Hoadley, in Plymouth, two miles from Spindle Hill, and remained there, putting clocks together, during the summer and autumn. Though skilful with his hands, he was dissatisfied with this work, and was allowed to go home at the New Year, 1815; and it was then that he went for three months to the school of Mr. Keys, where he studied arithmetic and grammar specially, and gave much attention to writing. After this school term he journeyed on foot with a cousin, Thomas Alcox, as far as western Massachusetts, selling small articles from house to house, and thus extending his acquaintance with geography and mankind. The boys made two trips, visited the old Connecticut prison at Newgate (an abandoned mine), but made no money. They were supplied with goods for peddling by George Mitchell, a merchant in Bristol; and, a lady living near him having edited a popular religious work, Flavel on "Keeping the Heart," Bronson Alcott travelled again, alone, into eastern New York, obtaining subscribers to the book, and distributing copies. It was about this time that the Episcopalians of Wolcott began to hold meetings on Sunday in the schoolhouse where the boy had been taught; and

1761, as Mr. Alcott was in 1799, and John Brown, the Kansas hero, in May, 1800. These and other famous men sprang from the condition of things here described, and most of them would have spoken of their State and its population as the worthy Jedediah Morse did.¹

"The bulk of the inhabitants are industrious, sagacious husbandmen. Their farms furnish them with all the necessaries, most of the conveniences, and but few of the luxuries of life. They, of course, must be generally temperate, and if they choose, can subsist with as much independence as is consistent with happiness. The subsistence of the farmer is substantial, and does not depend on incidental circumstances, like that of most other professions. There is no necessity of serving an apprenticeship to the business, nor of a large stock of money to commence it to advantage. Farmers, who deal much in barter, have less need of money than any other class of people. The ease with which a comfortable subsistence is obtained, induces the husbandman to marry young. The cultivation of his farm makes him strong and healthful. He toils cheerfully through the day, eats the fruit of his own labor with a glad-some heart, at night devoutly thanks a bounteous God for his daily blessings, retires to rest, and his sleep is sweet. There are no overgrown estates, with rich

¹ "American Gazetteer," article "Connecticut," published at Boston in 1797. Dr. Morse was the father of Prof. S. F. B. Morse, the inventor of the electric telegraph.

and ambitious landlords, to have an undue and pernicious influence in the election of civil officers. Property is equally enough divided, and must continue to be so, as long as estates continue to descend as they now do. No person is prohibited from voting. He who has the most merit, not he who has the most money, is generally chosen into public office. As instances of this, it is to be observed that many of the citizens of Connecticut, from the humblest walks of life, have arisen to the first offices in the State, and filled them with dignity and reputation.

“A thirst for learning prevails among all ranks of people in the State. More of the young men of Connecticut, in proportion to their numbers, receive a public education, than in any of the States.

“Connecticut has ever been a republic, and perhaps as perfect and as happy a republic as has ever existed. While other States, more monarchical in their government and their manners, have been under a necessity of undertaking the difficult task of altering their old, or forming new constitutions, and of changing their monarchical for republican manners, Connecticut has uninterruptedly proceeded in her old track, both as to government and manners; and by these means has avoided those convulsions which have rent other States into violent parties.”

A more concise and humorous picture of the Connecticut people was given a few years later by the poet Halleck, who was born in that State in 1790.

Writing about the time that young Alcott was visiting Virginia, Halleck said: —

“They love their land because it is their own,
And scorn to give aught other reason why;
Would shake hands with a king upon his throne,
And think it kindness to his majesty.
A stubborn race, fearing and flattering none,
Such are they nurtured, such they live and die.
All but a few apostates, who are meddling
With merchandise, pounds, shillings, pence, and peddling.”

Upon this rugged web of independence, thrift, equality, and patriotism were embroidered the ideal, unpractical graces of Alcott's intellect and spirit; but the groundwork was there, as the years of his youth showed.¹

¹ Emerson, in his journal of 1852, wrote: “Last July, Alcott went to his native town; found his father's farm in possession of a stranger, many of his cousins still poor farmers in the town, Wolcott itself unchanged since his childhood, whilst all the country round had been changed by manufactures and railroads, or with a still less population, tributary entirely to Waterbury. He went about and invited all the people, his relatives and friends, to meet him at five o'clock at the schoolhouse, on Sunday evening. Thither they came, and he sat at the desk and gave them the story of his life. Some went away discontented because they had not heard a sermon, as they hoped.”

CHAPTER II.

ADVENTURES IN VIRGINIA AND THE CAROLINAS.

LIVING in the vicinity of New Haven, and having among his ancestors and numerous cousinry many who had distinguished themselves at Yale College, Bronson Alcott wished to enter there, and lead the life of a New England scholar. But the small income of his father, and perhaps something in his own nature averse to the routine of what was then called education, rendered this desire unattainable. He sometimes regretted this in after years; but in fact, the training he received was better. Instead of a college course, and at the age when youths from rural New England usually enter college, he set out on the first of his voyages to Virginia and Carolina, where he had many adventures, and acquired what was to him, no doubt, better than four years spent in Yale College. The time occupied in this Southern life of travel, trade, and vicissitude was almost exactly four years, excluding the summers, which he spent in Connecticut among his kindred; and the cost of these enterprises was about the same —

something more than four hundred dollars — that a college education would have cost him.

It was customary at the beginning of this century, and indeed for forty years later, that educated young men from New England should begin life by teaching school, or serving as private tutors in the Southern States. Even if their education had not gone beyond that already described, in the common schools, they thought themselves competent, and generally were so, to teach the local schools at the South. Therefore, in October, 1818, when Bronson Alcott left home on his way to Virginia, his hope and confident expectation was to find a school not far from Norfolk, where he might teach children through the winter, earn his own living, and contribute something to the family expenses. His parents would gladly have kept him at home; but he wished, like most young men, to see the world for himself, and to try his fortune at a distance. Accordingly, he sailed from New Haven to Norfolk in the sloop "Three Sisters," commanded by a Connecticut skipper named Sperry, and reached Norfolk after a week's voyage, October 20.

In the autobiography already cited occurs this brief account of the first excursion, and that which immediately followed it in 1819-1820: —

"*Oct. 13, 1818.* Sailed from New Haven for Virginia, hoping to engage in teaching a common school

in that State. Finding this difficult, if not quite ridiculous, I commenced hawking small articles, as almanacs and tinware, about the city of Norfolk; and in the spring travelled into the surrounding counties, with sundry small articles of housewifery. Returned by way of New York, with a jaunt into New Jersey, peddling there for a month or six weeks, and reached Wolcott in May, 1819. Besides a suit of clothes, I brought home eighty-odd dollars to my father, who was then building a house on the site of the old one. There were now nine of us in the family; I had two brothers younger than myself, and four sisters, the youngest then an infant; in 1820 a third brother was born. My father raised the frame of his new house, June 12, 1819. In the following November I again sailed from New Haven, with my brother Chatfield Alcox, to engage in peddling as before,—desiring to aid my father to pay for the house he was building, and more especially to improve my knowledge of the world by such intercourse with the cultivated classes of the South as was permitted to a travelling chapman and youth such as I then was.”

The general nature of these early expeditions can perhaps best be learned in detail from a letter written by Bronson Alcott in his second year at Norfolk, to his father and mother. It is dated Norfolk, Jan. 24, 1820, and after some expressions of filial affection and piety, goes on to say,—

“We have been very successful in business, notwithstanding the dulness and hardness of the times, and

have traded as much and sold at as good advantage as we ever anticipated. We hope to do better hereafter, as we have but just begun, and Chat is altogether unacquainted with peddling. He does well, and will make a very good hand at the business before we return. He sells nearly half as much as I do, and at about the same profit. Our articles afford thirty-three per cent profit, exclusive of expenses; consequently in selling \$100, we clear \$33½. The last trip which we made we went out together, and were gone just two weeks. I sold \$100 worth of property, and Chatfield about \$50. We get our property of Allyn, as cheap as Ranney used to let me have it. Chatfield left Norfolk last week; I shall follow him within a few days.

“I am calculating on keeping him in the country, while I come to Norfolk to buy goods, as he cannot be of any service to me here, and our board costs but very little in the country, and \$3 a week in Norfolk. By this means he will be earning something continually.

“With our two trunks in our hands, toting them by our sides, we travel through the country, entering the rich and poor man’s house alike, exposing and offering our articles for sale. Father and mother, how do you think we look? Like two awkward, poor, unpolished, dissipated, homespun, begging, tugging Yankee peddlers, think you? No, — this is not the case with your sons. By people of breeding and respectability, they are treated with politeness and gentility; and if they are sometimes treated with contempt by the low, vulgar class of the community, it is then not worth minding.

For my part, I can make peddling in Virginia as respectable as any other business. I take much pleasure in travelling, and in conversing with the Virginians, — observing their different habits, manners, customs, etc. ; and I am conscious that it is of great advantage to me in many points of view. Yes, dear parents, we make the business not only respectable but lucrative ; and so long as mankind are unprejudiced against industry, perseverance, honesty, and integrity, they will consider the *person* with those qualities on his side, let him pursue whatever calling he may. I say that persons strictly adhering to those principles will be respected by them, however humiliated and contemptible he may appear to the silken sons of pride and dissipation.”¹

So much does the young merchant have to say for himself, and his condition among the Virginia planters. He then indulges in some remarks intended to reconcile his father to his absence from home, — using the familiar Connecticut argument of dollars and cents.

“ It was out of my own voluntary choice that I left home, and most willingly too, and for what? Two hundred dollars owed by a farmer who has no other means of accumulating that sum than by the cultivation of a farm of eighty acres — and when the times are ex-

¹ This passage is copied from the original letter. Other quotations made in “ New Connecticut ” are from an imperfect copy.

tremely dull, and the cultivation to be chiefly done by the owner, who is over forty-five years of age and considerably debilitated — is a great sum. If that parent has two sons who can earn him but very little during the winter season at home, and can, by running a little risk, and going five or six hundred miles from home, earn him, in eight or nine months, with prosperity on their side, that two hundred dollars, it would be considered by most as managing business the best way. Don't you think so, father?"

This letter is of the second year, it will be remembered. In a letter of the first year, written to his mother, Nov. 30, 1818, but edited in after years by the writer, who has varied his youthful utterances to suit later taste, he gives the following account of his unsuccessful attempt to open a school in Virginia: —

"My first care on arriving at Norfolk was to find board and lodging; and as the 'Three Sisters' would lie at the wharf for some days, for discharging her cargo, the captain allowed me to take my meals and sleep on board for a few days, till I should find better accommodations. Mr. Tisdale offered me employment and board and lodging at his place of business, by which I was enabled to discharge my obligations to Captain Sperry, and leave the sloop. My passage money was eight dollars. While engaged as an accountant with Tisdale, a gentleman from the country

informed me that I might obtain a school in his neighborhood, where young men from the North were frequently employed as teachers. As teaching was my object in coming South, I set out accordingly, on foot, for Kempsville, distant about twenty miles from Norfolk, and applied for a school. The parents were friendly, and about twenty scholars were promised; I was to teach for three months, at five dollars a quarter for each scholar, and if my services were approved, to continue for the year or more. But on application for board and lodging I found no one could accommodate me, and I returned, after making further inquiries for school-keeping in the surrounding country. As the plan of teaching seemed to be impracticable, I began on the 12th of November peddling about the city, purchasing my tinwares of Tisdale at his shop on Church Street. The business is profitable, and I am still pursuing it till something more desirable offers. Peddling is not what I came for and desired, but I am unwilling to be idle meanwhile."

It seems that his uncle, Dr. Bronson, gave the young would-be pedagogue a certificate of his ability to teach. Judging by his success in after years, this was something more than a compliment; but up to that time he had had no experience, was very youthful of aspect, and probably did not give the impression that he was such a disciplinarian as Virginia then required. His first adventure in search of a school was more fully described by him in af-

ter years; it brought him, as will be seen, into the region of that Dismal Swamp which the verses of Moore had made famous fifteen years earlier.

“When I went into Princess Anne County in quest of employment as a schoolmaster, the strangeness of the country and of the people in that neighborhood soon led me to question whether I was not bent on a fool’s errand, and must not reclaim my good sense by seeking another calling at once. And a venerable gentleman, whose guest I was for the night, had the kindness to assure me of the hopelessness of my pursuit, though I drew from my pocket my credentials, signed by the learned principal of Cheshire Academy. Why, then, longer persist in chasing an absurdity? It was plain that these people, dwelling around the Fens bordering on Dismal Swamp, ignorant as they were, had sense enough not to engage a strolling schoolmaster, come all the way from Yankeeland, to instruct their children. Convinced of the folly of the chase, I turned my face towards Norfolk. The Dismal Swamp was before me. I entered it some time in the afternoon. The path led alongside the canal, —

By tangled junipers, beds of reeds,
By many a fen, where the serpent breeds.

Evening approached, and the long stretch of the canal was still before me. A tempest arose, adding to the loneliness and terror. The cypresses, bent and swayed by the blast, fell now and then across the path, threat-

ening the head of the traveller. It was late in the evening when I found my companions in the Borough. Dismal as was the adventure, and discouraging, it saved me from a disastrous failure in pedagogy, and set me upon quite another errand."

We must suppose that this "venerable gentleman, whose guest I was for the night," was encountered while making further inquiries after the Kempsville scheme failed. The Dismal Swamp was then regarded as a fearful place; and is described by Dr. Morse in his "American Gazetteer" with impressive rhetoric, which seems to give point both to Moore's song and to young Alcott's alarm. Dr. Morse says: "Near the middle of the Dismal the cypress and cedar trees grow thick, and being always green, and loaded with very large tops, they are much exposed to the wind and easily blown down. Neither beast, bird, insect nor reptile approach the heart of this horrible desert; perhaps deterred by the everlasting shade, occasioned by the thick shrubs and bushes, which the sun can never penetrate, to warm the earth; nor indeed do any birds care to fly over it, any more than they are said to do over the Lake Avernus, for fear of the noisome exhalations that rise from this vast body of filth and nastiness. These noxious vapors infect the air round about, giving agues and other distempers to the neighboring inhabitants." This

whole region was first explored by Col. William Byrd, of Westover, Va., in 1728, while surveying the boundary between the two colonies of Virginia and North Carolina; and his account of passing through the Swamp occurs in his curious manuscripts lately printed.

Young Alcott was easily brought by his associations into the traditional Connecticut business of peddling, which from 1815 to 1830 was at the height of its prosperity in the States south of Pennsylvania. The Connecticut peddler's load was composed, says President Dwight, of tinware, pins, needles, scissors, combs, buttons, children's books, cotton stuffs,—a smaller or larger assortment to offer to his customers. "A number set out with large wagons loaded with dry-goods, hats, and shoes, together with tinware and the small articles already mentioned. These loads will frequently cost the proprietor from one to two thousand dollars, and are intended exclusively for the Southern and Western States. It is frequently the fact that from twenty to thirty persons are employed by a single house in the manufacturing and selling of tinware and other articles. The workmen, furnished with a sufficient quantity of the raw material to last them six months, are sent by water in the autumn to Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. They station themselves at some town in the inte-

rior, where the employer or agent has a store well furnished with such articles as the peddlers require. As the stock of each peddler is exhausted, he repairs to the store for a supply. In this way a large amount of goods are vended during the six or eight months they are absent."

It was customary for the little town of Wolcott to send half-a-dozen of its citizens forth on these excursions every year; and in the sloop "Three Sisters," which carried the prospective schoolmaster from New Haven to Norfolk, there were fifteen other passengers, chiefly peddlers from Connecticut, or workmen on tin going in the employ of the Tisdale family, who had a shop at Norfolk. Theirs was an occupation not much favored by the religious people of Connecticut, profitable as it was. Dr. Dwight is emphatic on this point; and there were passages early coming under Bronson Alcott's observation which confirm his words: —

"Many of the young men employed in this business part at an early period with both modesty and principle; their sobriety is exchanged for cunning, their honesty for imposition, and their good, decent behavior for coarse impudence. Mere wanderers, accustomed to no order, control, or worship, and directed solely to the acquisition of petty gains, they soon fasten upon this object, and forget every other of a superior nature. The only source of their pleasure or their reputation is

gain; and that, however small or however acquired, secures both. No course of life tends more rapidly or more effectually to eradicate every moral feeling."

That our Wolcott novice preserved himself from the influence of these bad examples speaks well for the family discipline in which he had been trained; but his innate love for show and outward repute was much more likely to lead him astray than any passion for gain. He began his trade in a small way, working at moderate wages for the tinman Tisdale, with whom he lodged at Norfolk, and earning at first only the money needful to pay his debt. But about December 20 he was able to buy for himself a small stock of Virginia Almanacs, and sell them to the citizens of Norfolk at a profit of two hundred per cent. Each almanac, costing threepence, was sold for ninepence; and the young man easily earned a dollar or two each day, so long as the Christmas holidays lasted. Then it occurred to him to enlarge his stock, and to sell trinkets and silks to the families in the surrounding country. He went, therefore, to a dealer in "fancy goods" at Norfolk, and bought wares costing nearly \$300, which he bestowed in two small tin trunks, to be carried in the hand, as he journeyed from house to house. There were tortoise-shell combs, thimbles, scissors, articles of ornament for ladies, puzzles and picture-books for children, spectacles, razors, and

many other wares for the men, — besides needles, buttons, sewing-silk, and much more that was not then a part of a peddler's stock in Eastern Virginia. The first trip was made in January, 1819, and was a circuit from Norfolk, by way of Hampton, thence across the country to Yorktown, and by the York County plantations back to Hampton, and thence into Princess Anne County, where he had in vain sought to teach school. This is a maritime county southeast of Norfolk, containing then some ten thousand inhabitants, of whom perhaps four thousand were slaves. — He was successful in these ventures, and wrote to his father, Feb. 14, 1819: —

“I returned last night from my first trading-trip into Princess Anne County. I was gone sixteen days, during which time my sales amounted to \$111, and at a good profit. I think I may continue in this business till June, but will return sooner if you wish my assistance about the spring farming. When I left Tisdale, January 27, and settled my affairs with him, I found my profits for the two and a half months were \$65. Selling fancy articles is more agreeable than peddling tinwares about the city. I hope to return to assist you about the building of the new house. I trust my winter's employment will prove a school of instruction for me, as you, dear father, suggest in your last. I am confident, indeed, of its having been such, and in matters which you have so frequently urged upon me, —

namely, ambition and perseverance, without which, and industry, men seldom acquire wealth."

"Money," he adds, "is more readily acquired here than at home, — a dollar as easily as a quarter there, — and may be as easily spent. But I have kept in mind the lessons which I have received respecting frugality and economy from my father."

Later in 1819, he continued his peddling excursions, visited the Virginian towns of Portsmouth, Smithfield, Williamsburg (the old capital of the colony), Gloucester, and others in that region; and traversed the surrounding districts, without anxiety or misadventure, and with something to show at the beginning of April as profits of the winter's trade. More than a hundred dollars was the net income, after all debts were paid; and travelling homeward with this, Alcott put \$80 into the hands of his father, as the price of the six months' time he had taken from the farm-work and the shop. The money went into the new house which his father was building, and which still stands on the hillside in Wolcott.¹

¹ I visited this house with Mr. Alcott in the autumn of 1881, after attending with him the interesting centennial anniversary of the town of Cheshire, where he had taught school with so much success, and where his uncle, Dr. Bronson, was at the head of the Academy and Divinity School for twenty years, until his death in 1826. It is a small, plain wooden cottage, the principal room being the kitchen or liv-

The results of the second year, 1819-1820, were equally good ; but the effect of associating in Virginia with wealthy and careless persons was to diminish the native habit of frugality so strongly displayed in the letter of January, 1820, already cited. Later in that year the two brothers were so prosperous that they began to sell their goods at wholesale, going by water from place to place, and trading with the merchants. In a letter dated Norfolk, March 19, 1820, before this wholesale business began, Bronson Alcott wrote to his cousin William :

“The times are called hard here in the Old Dominion,¹ but, from what I learn, are better than in the “land of steady habits” [meaning Connecticut]. Yet if the peddlers from that section of the country are calculating on large profits this season, they must manage their affairs with prudence and economy, or they will come far short of any anticipation of that kind. Considering the times, we are as successful as we expected to be. Wind and weather favoring, we take passage to-morrow for the Eastern Shore of Virginia, expecting to be absent from Norfolk six or seven weeks. We take goods worth about \$500, which we purchase of the firm of Allyn and Anderson, with the privilege of returning what we do not sell. Peddlers have become so numerous here that the late Virginia legislature passed an act
ing room, above which was Bronson Alcott’s bedchamber, with his shelf of books.

¹ A common name for Virginia.

imposing a tax of \$80 on peddlers of dry goods, and of \$40 on tin-peddlers, — the act to be enforced on the first of next May. Whether hand-peddlers like myself and brother will be called upon for a license, I wait to learn."

This second season ended prosperously, and it was midsummer or later before the gay young merchant returned to Wolcott to dazzle the eyes of the natives with his costly clothes and fine manners. He set forth again in October, 1820, for the South, — this time with his cousin and schoolmate William Alcott; their objective point being no longer Virginia, but South Carolina. They sailed from New Haven for Charleston as steerage passengers, with forty others, — most of them young men from Connecticut, who were going to work on a canal near Columbia. The voyage was long and stormy, the captain ignorant of the coast, and the vessel oftentimes in great danger. Finally they landed at Charleston, and then had a land journey of one hundred and twenty miles to make before reaching Columbia, in whose neighborhood they hoped to obtain schools for the winter, at good salaries. Dr. Alcott, twenty years later, wrote an account of this voyage and journey, which is given in full, in the notes to "New Connecticut." Some parts may be quoted :

"For the journey to Columbia there were no stages, and the steamboat which ran between the two places had to perform a very circuitous journey, — besides, the

fare was very high. There were many different roads, but they all went through a flat, marshy country, much of which at this season was covered with water, sometimes to the depth of several feet. Those who attempted to walk found it difficult, and were, in some instances, obliged to swim. Besides, each of us had a travelling trunk, as well as other baggage. We finally adopted the following plan. There were many countrymen in Charleston who had come down from the upper country to market, with large wagons loaded with cotton, who made it their business to carry back such loading as they could obtain. But they seldom carried travellers themselves. Indeed, there was usually no room nor accommodations. We could do no better than to put our baggage into their wagons and travel along with them, and fare as they did. Toward sunset of the third day after our arrival in Charleston we set out on our journey. I was so feeble, after my long seasickness, that I could but just drag myself along; but my friend (Mr. Alcott) was in better health, and did much to encourage me.

“Several pairs of horses or mules were harnessed to each wagon, and one beast to each wagon wore bells. One of the drivers — sometimes the boy, and sometimes the man — rode one of the horses, while the other trudged along on foot at his side. My companion and myself followed behind, — now musing on our condition, now, perhaps for the first time after we left home, casting a thought back to the land of our fathers.

“It was growing dark. ‘Where are we to put up?’

asked my companion and I, as modestly as we could. 'We shall soon come to the camping-ground,' said our Dutchman. To the 'camping-ground' we accordingly soon came, — about five miles from Charleston. Our teams were driven into a large, thick pine grove, a little way from the roadside, where the ground was tolerably dry; and arranged in a sort of circle around a spot that looked like a place where they had been accustomed to burn charcoal. We soon learned that it was a spot where travellers were accustomed to lodge or encamp, and, when the weather was cold, to build fires. While part of the company unharnessed and fed the horses, the rest went in pursuit of fallen wood for fuel. They soon collected a quantity of dry pine, — lightwood, or *light'ud*, as they called it, — and built a huge fire. Then they took from their wagons a kettle, and made some coffee, — for the Southern people, many of them, can hardly make a meal, as they imagine, without coffee. Having regaled themselves with corn-bread (hoe-cake) and bacon, and drank their coffee, the next thing was to prepare their beds. Each wagon carried a feather bed and a blanket. They spread the blanket on the ground and lay upon it, and then covered themselves with the bed. This, thought I, is an odd way of doing business; but I soon found it was the custom of the Dutch people in that part of the country, generally, to sleep under the feather bed, instead of upon it.

"We slept in the fields or woods five nights, before we reached Columbia, one day about noon, — and always by a fire of pine knots, logs, or limbs. We saw

cotton fields containing several hundred acres, and the slaves were collecting it. The weather was chilly, and they had fires in the old stumps, which were smoking like so many chimneys, the slaves shivering around them. The country was almost level; in some places so overflowed with water that we were obliged to wade a quarter of a mile at a time, at a depth of from two to twelve inches. Sometimes we could avoid the water by walking on logs or fences, or by clinging to the wagons, and we nowhere found water in the road deep enough for swimming. Columbia is a pleasant place, much more elevated than the rest of the country, and laid out in squares on a plain of two or three miles in extent, sloping off gently on every side. They were just building a canal around the falls of the Saluda River, just above the town, and some of my Northern friends were at work there. So we paid them a visit, and spent the night with them, but left early in the morning, and proceeded westward toward Newberry. This is a decent little village, forty-three miles from Columbia, and nearly one hundred and sixty from Charleston, with a court-house, and several shops and stores. It was the only place that could be called a village, except Columbia and Granby, that we had seen in South Carolina."

Bronson Alcott writing to his mother in Wolcott from Abbeville gives a similar account, with some additional particulars: "The streams were high;

there being no bridges, we forded them, and camped by night on some dry spot by the roadside. The nights were frosty, and we found our bed of pine-needles rather uncomfortable. Our Dutchmen were jocose in their way, and entertained us by their jokes and strange manners. Near Columbia we passed large fields of rice, indigo, and cotton; there were fires lighted in these, and the slaves were busy gathering the cotton, seen partly out of the pod. At Newberry Court House on the uplands, is the stand for peddlers in these parts. We purpose leaving to-morrow in pursuit of schools."

This pursuit was as unsuccessful as it had been in Virginia two years before. The log schoolhouses were in the midst of the woods, often far away from any road. Looking through the door or through crevices between the logs, the Connecticut cousins saw the schoolboys stalking round, a few sitting out of doors with their slates, and now and then one at the spring near by, getting water. The seats were benches made of planks. Bronson Alcott, in his "New Connecticut," pours contempt upon these rough temples of science, with their uncouth votaries, —

"Scant rudiments of learning (rude indeed)

The gaping towheads gather here to gain;

All of that little did the teacher need, —

Such length of body, with such lack of brain!

“Strangely your alphabet ye travesty,
 Ye dull wiseacres of the rusty land!
 Pronounce your final letters learnedly,
 ‘Izzard’ is ‘z,’ and next comes ‘ampersand.’”

Plainly the pronunciation, grammar, and syntax of Connecticut were not in demand in Carolina. In his autobiography Mr. Alcott says: “Finding teaching here impracticable, we walked from Newberry to Norfolk, and engaged in peddling there, and about my old haunts abroad in Virginia.” They reached Norfolk before the end of November, and went to a boarding-house in one of the lower streets, having but little money left after their long excursion. At this time Norfolk had about eighty-five hundred inhabitants. On the 5th of December, 1820, Bronson Alcott wrote to his mother from Norfolk, informing her of his change of plan. He says: —

“Finding our employment as teachers likely to prove unprofitable, we made the best of our way from Newberry Court House across North Carolina, to this old stand in Norfolk. We were fourteen days on the road, walking all the way and sending our trunks around hither by water. I had hoped never to undertake peddling again, — but it seemed our best resource under the present circumstances, and now that we are here. The business is new to my companion, but he acquiesces, and will try his hand at it instead of teaching, in which he has been so successful in the North. We

purpose leaving here in a day or two, taking my familiar route by Hampton, Yorktown, Gloucester, and the northern counties."

Their peddling prospered, as before, for a month or two; but in the middle of February Bronson Alcott was attacked with typhus fever, and did not recover until the middle of March. In this severe illness, soon resulting in delirium, William Alcott took care of his cousin; but the medical treatment which he received would astonish physicians of the present day, and might easily have cost the patient his life. William Alcott writes in his diary, Feb. 19, 1821, and subsequently, as follows:—

"Attended friend Amos, who was no better. We gave him some medicine, and on the morning of the 20th sent for Dr. Selden, who came and gave him a dose of camomile and jalap. He came a second time, and concluded to send a young man to bleed him, which was accordingly done. Toward evening the doctor came again, and afterwards sent a few papers of cooling powders.

"*Sunday, February 25.* My friend continues insane; he has, however, rested rather better than usual the last night, and I yet entertain strong hopes of his recovery. Ten days of fever have been worn away already.

"*February 26.* Amos appears more composed in mind and body; but he is still very sick,—his fever, which the doctor calls typhus, is violent, but less so than yesterday. I still hold out in health and spirits."

The patient slowly recovered, and on the 3d of April wrote thus to his mother in Wolcott: "Your letters of the 18th February and March 18 came duly to hand,—the former I did not know much of till since my recovery. William read it to me during my illness, but it made little impression in my feeble and wandering condition. My disease was typhus, and my fever ran its course, confining me to my room for twenty-five days, and leaving me feeble and much emaciated; but I am gaining fast, and now able to walk without support, and have a strong appetite. Dr. Selden, a kind and skilful physician, attended me; he is most reasonable in his charges. My good friend William took the best care of me during the whole time. I can never repay him. And I am spared to bless Him 'in whose hand our breath is,' for his gracious favor in raising me from this bed of helplessness to comparative strength, and desire to serve him in the future. I am not sure that William informed you of the danger till my fever abated. I remember requesting him to write to you. I am happy, dear mother, to learn of your returning health. I now know what sickness is myself, and can prize health as never before."

Recovering from this illness, Mr. Alcott continued his peddling with horse and wagon, riding into the neighboring county of Nansemond, and else-

where with his cousin, Thomas Alcox, by no means so good a companion as William, who in April returned to Wolcott. In June, Bronson Alcott with his other cousin started for the North, travelling slowly by the Northern Necks, Alexandria, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, to New York City, where, says his diary, —

“I purchase a costly suit of clothes, the best in Broadway, and wear the same, to the surprise of my townspeople and the chagrin of my father and my cousin William, to Spindle Hill, where I arrive in July. Read Thomson’s ‘Seasons,’ and journalize in the spirit of this period of gayety and extravagance. Now begin to write my name ‘Alcott’ instead of ‘Alcox,’ as my father wrote his; the old spelling being ‘Alcock,’ and so my grandfather wrote, and some of my uncles still.”

Up to this time Bronson Alcott and his brother had paid their father \$245 as the net earnings of their Virginia trade; but now the well-clad youth had come home in debt, having been ill, and also having used the money that should have paid for his Virginia goods, in buying new-clothes at New York. In the following September his father was compelled to endorse his son’s note “to F. T. Allyn, of Norfolk, for \$270, due him for goods.” The summer was spent in frivolous pursuits at Wolcott, — displaying the fine wardrobe and paying court to the maidens

of that rural neighborhood. The verses of the poetic autobiography tell the story :—

“ In these plain households, startling the surprise
At such unheard magnificence of dress, —
Are these our peddlers here before our eyes,
These handsome fellows, with such soft address ?

“ Black coat ? and white cravat of daintiest tie ?
Crimped ruffles, gleaming amethystine pin ?
Vest of Marseilles o’er trousers of drab dye,
Gold seal at watch-fob, jewelled watch within ?

“ Shall this gay youth his soberer cousin see,
Or journal write ? his mirror sees him more.
Not an accomplished coxcomb yet is he,
But far less bashful than he was before.”

This period in his life was a source of sorrow to his cousin William, to all his serious-minded friends, and to himself in after years, when the illusion of living easily and without labor, as he had seen the young gentlemen of Virginia doing, had melted away under the calamities and disappointments of the next year. Wishing to try his fortune again at the South, he persuaded his father to extend his credit, for an outfit bought at Berlin and Meriden, and to give him a horse for his land journey. With his brother Chatfield, his cousin Thomas, and two other companions, he left Wolcott, Nov. 7, 1821, and travelled through New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to Maryland ; whence

they proceeded to the city of Washington, crossed the Potomac and spent Sunday, November 25, near Mount Vernon. Early in December the brothers separated in Virginia, but met occasionally on their rounds in the counties between Norfolk and Washington. Bronson Alcott in his Journal notes down these dates and events.

“I am at Alexandria, Va., in November, 1821, at Norfolk Jan. 7, 1822, and ride on horseback thence on a silver speculation. The costly coat scorns peddling, and sinks money fast. Am at Richmond, March 21. Peddling will never do,—neither pleasure nor profit therein. At Norfolk, J. T. Allyn takes a bill of sale of my horse, wagon, and goods on account; and on the 12th of April I am at Warrenton, N. C., teaching penmanship with fifteen pupils; terms, \$3. I read here Goldsmith’s ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ and Johnson’s ‘Rasselas.’”

Mr. Alcott’s purpose in this expedition, which proved so expensive, was to liquidate the debts incurred by sickness, mischance, and ill management the year before; but he was sadly disappointed. The merchant who had given him credit at Norfolk attached his wagon and goods, and left him in April, on foot and with little money. Both he and his brother Chatfield were unfortunate this season; the latter, whose journal during this time has been preserved, makes this entry Feb. 6, 1822:—

“ I am sometimes on the water in a gale and at other times in a calm ; sometimes on land with plenty to eat and drink, and at other times in poverty with nothing to eat ; then sometimes with plenty of money, and sometimes not a cent,—and so it is. I shall never settle here ; the people have no economy, nor industry, nor perseverance, nor care for much save dissipation.”

Just before leaving Virginia for North Carolina, Bronson Alcott received a letter of expostulation on his conduct for the last year or two from his cousin William, which he says “ made a very deep impression on me, and led to some earnest resolutions, followed by earnest, and in the end successful, endeavors to reinstate myself in my own eyes, and the eyes of those who knew me. This intention accompanied me to Carolina, and was deepened and confirmed the next year by intercourse there with the Friends, among whom I travelled in 1823.” But in 1822 his North Carolina experiences were of a different sort. He had visited Warrenton, hoping to support himself there by a writing-school ; but he found himself in May losing money instead of earning it ; rather than continue at this rate, he left the town at night on foot, and joined his brother Chatfield in Gloucester County, Virginia. Thence, May 25, 1822, he started again on foot for Connecticut, his brother having lent him all his

spare money (\$8.50) for travelling expenses. The point of departure was Westmoreland in Virginia, and the journey is thus described by the poor pedestrian : —

“Wishing to pass unmolested on my way, and as speedily as possible, I took the shortest route from Warrenton to the Northern Necks of Virginia, where I hoped to find my brother. My slender avails from my writing-classes were not sufficient to take me by stage. As my brother was not then about returning home when I met him, I set forth from Westmoreland on my journey north. It was a long way, — the season sultry, the roads dusty ; but a steady persistency and the safe goal in my eye kept me stepping along day after day. I came late at the inns, and was off early in the morning, resting at times, and napping under the shade-trees, with my budget for a pillow. At Baltimore I fell into the great road which I had travelled once before with my cousin. On reaching Amboy, New Jersey, to take the steamer, I found my boots were unmanageable, and threw them into the dock. When the bell rang for the fare, I paid mine with the rest ; but the steward presently returned it with the captain’s compliments. It was dusk when the steamer touched the pier at New York, where the hackmen were. ‘Ride, sir?’ ‘Carriage, sir?’ No ; the gentleman in stocking feet passed on, and to the shoe-dealer’s, and went thence shod as others are ; the tailor, too, in Maiden Lane, mending his coat while he slept. The next morning saw him on

the packet boat for Norwalk, whence he walked through Bridgeport, Derby, and Waterbury on his way. On reaching Spindle Hill, there remained sixpence of the Warrenton moneys, and the invaluable experience it shall take years to count for him."

This affair was indeed the turning-point in the young spendthrift's career; for although he still cherished the hope that he might regain good fortune at the South, where he had found it at his first adventure there, he no longer pursued the wasteful course of the last year or two. He left Wolcott for Petersburg, Virginia, Oct. 27, 1822, and a month later wrote to his brother Chatfield as follows:—

"Our purpose is to leave here in a few days for North Carolina, and to take out licenses for trading in the counties of Perquimans and Chowan, near Edenton. I shall hope to meet you in Norfolk at New Year's. Dear brother, I have planned to retrieve my fortunes and make some money to pay my debts. I have seen the folly of my past extravagance, and hope you will take timely warning by my example. A young man at twenty-three should have learned his lesson at less cost than I have. Our father's counsels were wise, and I, at least, should have taken the consequences of my folly, and spared his anxieties and embarrassments. Do you say this advice, these cautions, sound singular from me? Well, prudence is a duty; we must not squander

other people's money for such costly outfits as I have done. You have been less extravagant than myself; but the best of us may be led astray, as I have been by others, weak and half-willing as I was. Pray think of these things in time, and spare our parents and friends at home further troubles."

This expedition was as unfortunate as the preceding one, but apparently through no fault of the young merchant, who attended to his business strictly, but not very successfully, among the people of North Carolina and Southern Virginia. It was his purpose to extricate his father from the debts incurred on his behalf in 1821-1822; but instead of this he fell ill in the spring of 1823, and the debt was slightly increased when he reached home in July. It then amounted to \$600; and as he had previously paid his father \$180, it seems that his five years' experiences in Virginia and Carolina cost the young scholar the net sum of \$420, — something less than the same time spent in the college and professional school at New Haven would then have cost him. But these years were to him a more liberal education than Yale College afforded seventy years ago; and they closed with a period of religious instruction among the Quakers of North Carolina, which had an important influence on Bronson Alcott's opinions and conduct in after years. His autobiography gives this brief account

thus wrote concerning what came under his own censorious observation: —

“Many instances in Virginia have convinced me that the fear of God, or even his presence, is little thought of or regarded. Here, when one dies, he is directly put into the ground, without any ceremony of devotion. If he be a person of note, some months after, all the friends are invited to a feast, and prayers are read over the grave. And I find everybody here goes to heaven when they die, whether it be in a duel or in the natural way. . . .

“You cannot be half so much troubled by the Baptists and Methodists as we are here, — in short, they are almost the only preachers. The latter are much the most decent and regular, have some religion, and preach liberal doctrine. But the Baptists are the most vile part of society. The ministers are liars, thieves, drunkards, etc., and so are their disciples. Why so? Because their doctrine is, when once converted, you can do no evil. This I have heard them say. How can we expect any morality, where such vile principles are disseminated? Three of Mr. A.’s negroes are preachers, and all noted villains, — therefore the better Christians. . . .

“I have frequently mentioned that we have here no church on the Sabbath. I lately rode sixteen miles to attend church, and after all heard a sermon thirteen minutes long, and almost *verbatim et literatim* from Dr. Blair. I presume the Doctor supplies nearly all the

later days, looking back upon Virginia from the changes which political strife and civil war had wrought, Mr. Alcott was inclined to judge his acquaintances there very favorably. He said:—

“The abolition of slavery had not, while I was travelling in these parts, become an absorbing question with the people from whom I received such graceful hospitalities. My host or hostess sometimes alluded with impatience to the annoyance of caring for and being served by those persons, whom they held beneath them in every sense. I saw few open instances of cruelty, and was surprised at perceiving the kindest relations occasionally existing between mistress and maid. The elegant refinement and gracious courtesy, of which I was enamoured at the time, doubtless covered from my eyes the iniquities of the system. I recall no instance of its defence by any one during my sojourn among the first families dwelling in the most fertile lands on the James and York Rivers.”

A few names have been preserved of these Virginia families whose acquaintance the young merchant then made. He says, in a note to “New Connecticut”:—

“Among the distinguished planters at whose mansions I remember to have called, were the Tabbs and Taliaferros, Nelsons and Dabneys, living on the shores of York and North Rivers. It was a continual wonder and surprise to the household by what stratagem I

passed through the gates (guarded as these were by fierce mastiffs howling about my heels) and came to their doors. As I had no fear of these creatures, they seemed to take me as an accepted visitor, and affectionately escorted me thither."

In this region and at this time there lived in Virginia that remarkable Southern planter, Thomas Dabney, whose life, lately published by his daughter, gives a picture so complete of that class which Mr. Alcott had in mind when, writing to his cousin William in 1820, he said: "Hospitality is a distinguishing trait of the Virginia people, rich or poor; and their polished manners and agreeable conversation ingratiate the traveller at once in their favor. The planters are an educated class, gentlemen in the best sense of the word. I pass many an evening at their hospitable homes." Colonel Dabney lived in Gloucester County from 1820, when he married, until 1835, when he removed to Mississippi; and the way of life among the planters there, at the very period when Mr. Alcott was peddling in those regions, is thus described by his daughter:

"Everybody kept open house; entertaining was a matter of course; anything and everything was made the occasion of a dinner-party. If one of the colored fishermen succeeded in catching a sheepshead, his orders were to run up a signal-flag. This was an invitation to dinner to every gentleman in the neighborhood. At

five minutes before the time for dinner they would ride up or come by boat to the door of the house that had the signal flying."

Yet Colonel Dabney, brought up in this easy manner, was the person who, when he heard it reported that General Sherman, marching through Georgia, had said he "would like to bring every Southern woman to the wash-tub," responded by word and action, "He shall never bring my daughters to the wash-tub; I will do the washing myself," — and so he did, for two years. "He placed the clothes on the line as carefully as if they were meant to hang there always, — and they must be admired too." He also, at seventy years old, taught himself to plant a garden, and supplied his family with the product of it for years. He urged his Mississippi friends to follow his example; and when one of them said "he had no turn for working in a garden," Colonel Dabney viewed him with scorn: "No turn! I hear that he allows the ladies to do all this work! I have no toleration for such 'big Indian' talk." It was such a character as this — and they were not uncommon among the Virginian gentry — that young Alcott would admire, with his instinctive love of the best, his selective eye, and his defect on the side of humor. It was the best in Virginia that he saw; and Virginia, as Henry Adams says, had then much that was best in America. I quote from this ener-

getic writer his description of the squirearchy of eastern Virginia:¹—

“The contrasts were curious, in this provincial aristocracy, between old-fashioned, overstrained affectations of courtesy and culture, and the rough brutality of plantation habits. On one side the Virginian might be as brutal as the roughest cub that ever ran loose among the negro cabins of a tobacco plantation; he might be violent, tyrannical, vicious, cruel, and licentious in language as in morals, while at the same time trained to habits of good society, and sincerely feeling that exaggerated deference which it was usual to affect towards ladies; he might be well read, fond of intelligent conversation, consumed by ambition, or devoured by self-esteem. His manners were deferential, mild, and charming when at their best, and intolerable when the spirit of arrogance seized him. Nowhere could be found a school of more genial and simpler courtesy than that which produced the great men and women of Virginia, but it had its dangers and affectations; it was often provincial and sometimes absurd.”

His intercourse with such Virginians as are here described was of the greatest service to Bronson Alcott; he was a chapman as much at leisure as the gentry themselves, for he could stop and read books, or talk with the family, instead of plying his trade.

¹ Life of John Randolph, pp. 11, 12. Boston, 1882.

Truly, an idyllic picture, and a way of life now quite lost everywhere.

“Kind courtesies our guest from host receives,
In conversation stays, nor hastes away;
Amid the learned libraries’ charmed leaves,
Left to himself, he reads the livelong day;
Or courts the matron’s choicer company,
Mild sunshine mirrored in her friendly face;
Or daughters’ glances, shy, yet fancy free,
Refined by modesty and maiden grace.”

To a youth bred as he had been, in the narrow ways of a country town in Connecticut, the comparatively elegant and courtly life of these plantation houses was a graceful and impressive revelation. It was the first school of fine manners (except that which he entered at his mother’s knee) in which he was trained. Thomas Cholmondeley, a Shropshire gentleman and Oxford scholar, meeting Mr. Alcott in 1854, and hearing from us the story of his youthful years, of his farm life and his pilgrimage as a peddler, could scarcely believe it true. “Why,” said Cholmondeley, “your friend has the most distinguished manners, — the manners of a very great peer,” — which was the highest compliment an Englishman could pay.¹ He would have

¹ “Our Alcott,” wrote Emerson in 1861, “has only just missed being a seraph. A little English finish and articulation to his potencies, — and he would have compared with the greatest.”

been still more surprised had we told him that this polish of manner was acquired during his adventures in Virginia and the Carolinas, by contact with a class then justly esteemed the first gentlemen in America; the class which gave to the world Washington, Jefferson, Marshall, the mild statesman Madison, and the chivalric Colonel Dabney.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHESHIRE SCHOOL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

AT the time when Bronson Alcott returned from Virginia, and found that he had a vocation as schoolmaster in Connecticut, the public schools of that State were in very low condition, according to the testimony of Dr. William Alcott, Rev. S. J. May, Mr. Woodbridge, and other educational reformers who lived in Connecticut and had personal knowledge of its affairs. Bright boys contrived to pick up an education, partly in these schools, and partly by their efforts at home, such as have been described in the case of the Alcott cousins. But there was even among the learned a sort of contempt for the common schools, which found expression in such utterances as the following, quoted by Alcott without mentioning the author's name, in his diary for 1826:—

“Professor X. says: ‘We find no advantage in pursuing a different course of instruction from what has hitherto been practised. The world talks about im-

provements in instruction, — about the monitorial plan, about scholars teaching each other, and a thousand new-fangled notions; they are good for nothing, — I would not give a straw for all of them. Such puffing and blowing about them is disgusting. The public prints are full of trash which is palmed off upon the people. The money appropriated for common schools ought to be applied to better purposes, — to the support of colleges. Little good can ever be done in common schools. Our dependence must rest upon colleges chiefly. Cannot some means be devised to get part or the whole of the school fund applied to the use of colleges? and thus have it benefit the young, instead of being thrown away?"

This opinion of the college professor — that the income of the Connecticut school fund, instead of being applied, as the law directed, to common schools, ought to be used "for better purposes" — reminds one of the worthy deacon in that little republic, who a few years earlier, when the common people began to hear Universalist preachers in the corner schoolhouses, spoke thus one evening at the prayer-meeting: "Brethren, we have heered a stran-nge doctrine preached in these parts lately, — that all men are finally to be saved; but, brethren, we hope for better things." Bronson Alcott also hoped for better things than the school system as he found it; he held that all children were finally to be saved by education; and this was

strongly in his heart as a sentiment, before he had developed it, by study, experience, and reflection, into a thoughtful system, such as we shall find it in his Boston and Philadelphia schools. With the insight of genius, he perceived what ought to be done to bring the common school up to its proper function ; and in the considerable town of Cheshire, where his uncle, Dr. Bronson, was then at the head of the Cheshire Academy, he obtained the position of village schoolmaster in November, 1825, and began a two years' course of school reform, such as has not been seen before or since in New England. He anticipated most of the changes afterward wrought by Horace Mann and others, in the public-school system ; and without any intimate knowledge of what had been done by Pestalozzi in Switzerland, he followed the same ideal path, and accomplished similar results in his small field of action. As his friend Emerson afterward said, so Alcott might have said of the great leaders in education : —

“ What these strong masters wrote at large in miles,
I followed in small copy in my acre ;
For there's no rood has not a star above it ;
And every atom poises for itself,
And for the whole.”

It is true that Bronson Alcott was preceded in some of his improvements on the wretched village school of his boyhood, by his cousin William, who

began teaching a little earlier, in their native town of Wolcott; and due credit should be given to Dr. Alcott for this. But such was the character of the two cousins in respect to originality, that the inspiration for these changes is quite likely to have come from Bronson Alcott; who possessed, as Emerson wrote to him (Feb. 27, 1836), "the rare power to awaken the highest faculties,—a power of reflection and of expression too great to leave you any liberty in our time and country, wherein is such a dearth of both, to neglect or conceal your gifts."

These gifts were not concealed from his playmate and schoolmate, William Alcott, who opened the way for his cousin to teach his first school in the town of Bristol, soon after his return from Virginia, and his recovery from the long debility and depression which followed his illness in North Carolina. Under date of 1824, the autobiography says (April to November) : —

"Walked with my brother Chatfield Alcott to Paris, in New York,¹ hoping to obtain a school in that section ;

¹ Paris (locally pronounced *Payris*) was the village concerning which Dr. Backus, father-in-law of Gerrit Smith, made the repartee which Mr. Smith was fond of repeating. The anecdote dates from about this period, or a little earlier, for Mr. Smith married the daughter of his college president in 1819. A resident of Paris, who was then promoting what is

but a return of the ague and fever taken in North Carolina last year, disabled me and sent me back to my father's in May, to spend the summer. Then ill-health, the result of unskilful management of my malady, kept me in a low and melancholy state of mind, till brighter prospects dawned upon me with the opening of my school in Cheshire. I had taught school in the Fall Mountain district of Bristol four months, in the winter of 1823-1824; I taught penmanship in Wolcott in the autumn of 1824; and soon after took the school in West Street, Bristol, for four months, 1824-1825."

In these preliminary schools he tested some of the methods, and suggested some of the changes, which he afterward carried out in Cheshire.

Writing from Wolcott, July 3, 1827, after his experiment of two years at Cheshire had closed, Mr. Alcott thus describes its beginning:—

now called "a real estate boom," was calling on Dr. B. and setting forth the advantages of his town. "In fact, Dr. Backus, all we want now in *Payris* is water and good society." "Ah, indeed," replied the Doctor, "I believe that is all they feel the need of in Hell." Chatfield Alcott established himself in Paris, and remained there for some years. In February, 1826, Bronson Alcott wrote to him: "If you are living with Deacon H., he is a worthy and pious employer. When I was in Paris I rode with him to Bridgewater and a village on the great western turnpike, and had much conversation with him. I formed a very favorable opinion then, and heard him well spoken of by others." Good society, therefore, had reached Paris by that time; but there are said to be deacons also in the other place.

“From Bristol, where I taught in the spring of 1825, I went to Cheshire. During the summer I was employed under my uncle’s eye in reading, preparatory to instructing, and likewise practised writing and punctuation while preparing matter for the press of the ‘Churchman’s Magazine,’ which my uncle edited, — by whose conversation and habits I was much benefited. I lived with him, and my reading included Edgeworth’s Practical Education, Dwight’s Theology, Miller’s Retrospect, Kitt’s Elements, Reed, Stewart and Locke on the Philosophy of Mind, Watts’s Logic, etc. In the summer of 1825 I spent some time at my father’s during July and August, in agricultural labor. In November I commenced school in the Centre District schoolroom of Cheshire. At first the school was not large, but during its progress the number of scholars amounted to nearly eighty. With some few improvements, the old plan of instruction was adhered to in the beginning. But as I went on, the course of instruction and discipline was found to involve, as its leading principle, the production and original exercise of thought. I found that whatever children do themselves is theirs; and besides the advancement of intellectual progress, this gives also an increase of intellectual power. Originality, at the same time that it marks progress, tends to produce strength, and ability to encounter more severe trials. I placed much dependence also on the practice of analysis in every study. To define all the words in reading, writing, grammar, and geography, as well as in the spelling lessons, was our constant prac-

tice. The number of pages gone over was not so much considered as completeness of attainment. But variety was also consulted in the plan of study, and fatigue as much as possible avoided. Curiosity was kept under judicious direction and exercise. Thus the course of nature was followed. I found that the system which does not cultivate the affections is very imperfect, for no permanent results could be had otherwise. Once gain the affection of children, and they may be led at your inclination; no compulsory measures will be necessary; they will obey, not from the fear of punishment, but because it is a pleasure to obey. Constant, uniform kindness was my most successful instrument, and I found it more effective than the harsher mode of castigation and cruelty. The punishment for delinquency was aimed directly at the mind; to inflict pain on the body for the errors of the mind operated, as I found in most cases, unfavorably. No corporal punishment was used in the management of the Cheshire school. Upon looking over our course, I now perceive a degree of advancement which on the whole is flattering. I have become in some degree acquainted with the principles and modes of rational instruction, and have a desire to turn my efforts into this channel of good to my fellow-men. I established a school library consisting of several hundred volumes, which were read not only by the pupils, but by others in their families; and thus many young minds not immediately under my care received instruction from our library."

Among the volumes purchased for this Cheshire school library (one of the earliest in New England), are found not only the text-books then in use, including the remarkable mathematical series of Warren Colburn, but also the works of Miss Edgeworth, *Pilgrim's Progress*, many books of travels, Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Locke on the Understanding, Watts on the Mind, Cogan's *Treatise on the Passions*, Browne's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, the newly established *Journal of Education*, edited by Mr. William Russell (a Scotch graduate of the University of Glasgow, who afterward became a life-long friend of Mr. Alcott's), and other works of a high class, never before introduced to the notice of pupils in the common schools.

So marked was the success of the young reformer in the eyes of those persons in Connecticut who knew, in 1827, what a good school is, that they began to praise it in the journals. The "*Boston Recorder*" of May 14, 1827, makes this observation, perhaps the first to appear in print concerning the Cheshire School:—

"A writer in Connecticut, noticing our remark that persons have no standard by which to compare, except the schools they have been familiar with from childhood, admits its general correctness. But he says, 'There is one school of a superior or improved kind, viz., Mr.

A. B. Alcott's school in Cheshire, — the best common school in this State, perhaps in the United States.' ”

The attention of Rev. S. J. May, who had been for some years pastor of a Unitarian society in Brooklyn, Conn., was now directed towards this superior school, and in the summer of 1827 he became personally acquainted with Mr. Alcott. They sympathized not only on the subject of education, but in those more liberal religious opinions which Mr. May represented, and in which he was almost as solitary in Connecticut as Alcott was in his advanced Pestalozzian practices. In his autobiography Mr. May has given the following instance of sectarian intolerance at this time in Brooklyn: —

“ I had no religious intercourse with the members of the Orthodox church, nor ministerial intercourse with their pastor. But I sought to establish and maintain friendly relations with all my neighbors, and was quite successful. They invited me to their houses as a visitor, and they visited me in return. The prominent physician of the town, Dr. Waldo Hutchins, was a member of the Orthodox church, and his father and all his relatives in neighboring towns belonged to the same denomination. But he was my medical adviser and personal friend. Four or five years after our acquaintance commenced, he was taken sick and died. When conscious that he was approaching the grave, he sent for me to converse and pray with him. He begged me to visit

him often, and sent for me once at midnight. The morning after his decease I was informed that he was to have a public funeral, and that he had requested his wife and father that I might be called on to preach the sermon, naming his father's minister at Killingly and two other Orthodox ministers and particular friends as those who he wished should officiate at the other services at his house and in the church. As I expected, and foretold his afflicted family, those gentlemen refused to appear with me in public as a Christian minister. I then advised that another should be requested to preach in my stead, and I be allowed to take my place, as I could sincerely, among the mourners. But neither the wife nor the father would consent. The dying request of the dear departed one must be complied with, and they therefore begged me to perform all the services. A large concourse of personal and professional friends attended the funeral, among them several of the Orthodox ministers of the adjoining towns; and out of regard for the family some who had refused to take any part with me were obliged to hear my prayers and listen to my sermon. This was a lesson they did not expect would be given them, and they never forgot it."

No doubt Mr. Alcott suffered during his reforming career as schoolmaster in Cheshire, from a suspicion, which even then was well founded, that he was not sound in the Orthodox faith of Connecticut; but at any rate the petty spirit

shown by this affair at Brooklyn was one of the constant obstacles to his continued popularity as a teacher. Emerson said, many years later, speaking of his friend's conversations: "Mr. Alcott is always Don Quixote, and his audience is always Sancho Panza." But at first the earnestness, affection, and superiority of the young teacher carried all before him. In the summer of 1826 he had changed the whole interior aspect of the old-fashioned school-house in which he began his labors. It was a room with two doors and six windows, — three on each side; it was heated by a stove exactly in the middle of the room, around which was a central open space, where he began that year a course of gymnastics,—probably the first ever used in a Connecticut common school. Mr. Alcott's earliest improvement in schoolroom arrangements consisted in giving to each pupil a convenient desk and seat, which was to be kept in order by the one to whom it should be assigned for the time being. He says, in his diary for 1826:—

“Of these desks, twenty-two were entirely isolated from any others; sixteen were arranged as single desks, but with double seats, in which two scholars might sit, and four were arranged in such order as to afford room for six scholars to be commodiously seated, having the desks in common. These last were intended for the

smaller scholars. Most of these desks fronted the north side of the schoolroom, at which was placed the Instructor's desk, facing the south. At the north end of the room were likewise two desks, elevated above the surface of the floor, so as to give the persons sitting in them an opportunity of overlooking all the other desks. These were intended as stations for an officer called a Superintendent, whose business should be to overlook the conduct of the scholars seated at the lower desks, and, in case of a misdemeanor, to mark down the name and offence of the individual in a record book prepared for that purpose. These superintendents, of whom there are two, one for Masters and one for Misses, are furnished with an assistant superintendent, on whom the office devolves in the absence of the principal, or while he is engaged in study. These superintendents are to be supplied from the classes in turn, holding their offices for the time being, and appointed by the Instructor. To be appointed to this office is to be considered a mark of honor and confidence."

Mr. Alcott even went so far as to leave his school entirely for a day in the charge of these monitors at their high desks, while he himself was away; and to allow his pupils to choose a jury from themselves, before whom might be arraigned such as should violate the twenty-seven rules of the winter school. Among these rules were the following: "To pay particular attention to the cleanliness of the schoolroom; to articulate all exercises

in such voice as to be heard distinctly at any part of the room; to indulge not the habit of saying Can't when urged to mental effort; to tell no tales injurious to the feelings or reputation of others; to indulge not in habits of forgetfulness." The jury, instructed by the teacher, acting as judge, were to pass sentence on the violators of these rules, from which the judge alone might reprieve. Upon this jury, Nov. 9, 1826, were chosen by the pupils the first feminine jurymen who ever sat in Connecticut; its members being Alfred Baldwin, Reuben Merriman, Angeline Sanford, and Eliza Foote. The last-named girl was a member of the distinguished Foote family in Cheshire, from which came senators and sea-captains, among them Admiral Foote, who did so much service in the Civil War, and from which also in the female line Henry Ward Beecher and Mrs. Stowe were descended. This jury was selected in a sort of town meeting of the thirty-five pupils who attended the winter school the first day of the term; and in the afternoon of the second day, the diary proceeds as follows:—

"The subject of physical exercises was resumed. Voted unanimously to introduce play games for exercise within doors. Several plays were named,—‘Exercise around the Stove,’ ‘Imitate the Voice,’ and ‘Grand Mufti’ were performed on the spot, and entered on the

list of sports for the term. The general voice was to omit out-of-door sports forenoon and afternoon, during the term. The allotment of desks to scholars was attended to, and I requested them to agree in this respect among themselves. Books from the library to be at the perusal of scholars. Class books for scientific study were discussed, and considerable anxiety exhibited, — books of this description being evidently desired. The members of our community appear competent for self-government. They are urging their way in the pathway of science, looking to the instructor as a guide and companion. This sentiment on the part of the girls is general; of the few exceptions the boys form the number. Success in this course must be the work of time, of attention, of philosophy and perseverance, — in the spirit of Bacon's maxim, 'Nature is best subdued by the observant of her own laws.' The beneficial effect of superintendents in preserving order in school movements is already apparent. It lessens the labors of the Instructor, and prepares young minds for a proper discharge of official duty. The younger members are much pleased with the office. To be allowed a seat in the Forum attaches dignity to the occupant, in their estimation. It also prompts to exercise those feelings of candor and charity by which the great machinery of social life is animated and kept in process; and it offers a comparison by which the Divine omnipresence is brought to the apprehension of children. As the superintendent overlooks and marks down the violations of rule, so does the Great Superin-

tendent overlook and mark down deviations of duty. To consider ourselves as acting under an inspection which takes cognizance of all our actions is the great prompter to duty."

When did a Yankee schoolmaster, who had trained himself by peddling, ever announce such grand principles of moral government in his little kingdom? No wonder the persons who witnessed the progress of his school were astonished at what they saw and heard, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Still more surprised would they have been could they have read the trenchant comments he was making day by day in his private journal:—

"The hidden principles which actuate men to wrong conduct must be changed; the whole mass of thought and feeling must be new-leavened. What is doing to accomplish this all-important work? It will be replied that ministers and teachers are continually going forth, not only through our own land, but to every part of the civilized world—to savage nations—with the everlasting gospel. We ardently bid them God-speed,—through their means the world will assuredly be made better. But much, very much more, might be effected, were the principles of that gospel better understood and practised among ourselves. Let us not, after having preached to others, ourselves be found cast-aways. Instead of exhausting all our sympathies for the condi-

tion of children whom we call heathen, may we at least reserve a part for our own suffering offspring. Let our wisdom and affection in the first place provide for them, give them instruction, mental, moral, and physical ; and the immense contribution now made for the conversion of others will be unnecessary. Our children will then contribute unasked, — not their money, merely, but their time, their talents, all that they hold dear. They will engage in the work of reformation, not in distant countries, but at home, — not among pagans only, but among paganized Christians. They will in the first place heal themselves, that they may with more confidence prescribe for others. Ministers have long preached, instructors have long taught, — and perhaps a better specimen of their labors cannot be given than the present state of humanity. After all these well-meant endeavors, society throughout wears the stamp of crime. Man still plods on in his grovelling course ; Mammon reigns, oppression, war, and misery still grow in rank luxuriance. Virtue sleeps confined, benevolence is doomed a beggar, — unclothed, unshod, without a friend, without a home. This preaching has not produced its intended effect, which is, to make men better and wiser ; or, in other words, to raise man from sensual to mental enjoyment. To address men incompetent to reason, by reason, is folly ; such are governed by precedent and passion, — their reasoning powers sleep inactive from want of exercise. They have been content to let others think for them, and blindly to follow where others lead. Where is the individual who boldly dares assert opin-

ions differing from pre-established notions, — dares to think for himself? Where is the person who is not surrounded by prejudices and traditionary opinions, so strong and deeply planted that the light of truth is shut quite out? And to such are clergymen preaching. They theorize, — do they practise, or teach others to practise, the religion they preach? If they understand its spirit, why not illustrate that spirit in practice, and thus become a light to others?"

Here we see the active though still latent germ of that radicalism in which Alcott long led his brethren of the Transcendentalist school of opinion. It was innate with him, — not caught from the mind of another, but kindled by him in many a more youthful disciple, from 1826 onward, for half a century. From the same diary, Dec. 6, 1826, I quote this passage, which has a bearing directly on the question of Scriptural authority, although dealing apparently with books in general:

"It is not from books entirely that instruction is to be drawn. They should lie by us, for occasional instruction only. When doubts and uncertainties arise, they may sometimes explain the difficulty and point to the truth. Frequently, however, they may lead us astray, — they are imperfect. Adherence to them has been the cause, and still continues to be, of perpetuating errors among men, and that to an alarming extent. Ideas when recorded in a book carry with them a kind of

dignity and certainty, which awe many into implicit belief. They often impose the most irrational and absurd conclusions on the peaceful understanding. It dares not doubt, — fear keeps it ignorant, — authority lifts her head and commands instant belief. Reason, thus hushed into silence, sleeps in serene repose. To think for herself is denominated pride and arrogance. And millions of human minds are in this state of slavery and tyranny. How shall they escape? Rebel. Think for themselves; let others grumble. Dare to be singular; let others deride. Follow reason; let others dwell in the land of enchantment. Be men; let others prattle. Practise; let others profess. Do good; let others define goodness. Act; let others sleep. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might, and let a gainsaying, calumniating world speculate on thy proceedings; let them go from house to house and hear some new thing; let them spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not."

It was the Cheshire School in its successes, its failures, and its consequences, direct and remote, which prepared the young schoolmaster for his mission to the world in after years.

It seems that the acquaintance between Bronson Alcott and the May family of Boston grew out of a letter from Dr. Alcott to Rev. S. J. May, of Brooklyn, Conn., who was one of the first

in Connecticut to interest himself in common schools. Mr. May's autobiography, under date of 1827, contains this passage:—

“Dr. William A. Alcott, then living in Wolcott, a philosopher and a philanthropist, wrote to give us some account of a remarkable school, kept on a very original plan, in the adjoining town of Cheshire, by his kinsman, Mr. A. B. Alcott. His account excited so much my curiosity to know more of the American Pestalozzi, as he has since been called, that I wrote immediately to Mr. Alcott, begging him to send me a detailed statement of his principles and methods of training children. In due time came to me a full account of the school at Cheshire, which revealed such a depth of insight into the nature of man, such a true sympathy with children, such profound appreciation of the work of education, and was, withal, so philosophically arranged and exquisitely written, that I at once felt assured the man must be a genius, and I must know him more intimately. So I wrote, inviting him urgently to visit me. He came and passed a week with me before the end of the summer. I have never, but in one instance, been so immediately taken possession of by any man I ever met in life. He seemed to me like a born sage and saint. He was a radical in all matters of reform; went to the root of all theories, especially the subjects of education, mental and moral culture.”¹

¹ Life of Samuel J. May, pp. 121, 122. Boston: Roberts Brothers.

Mr. May suggests a comparison between Alcott and Pestalozzi; and that method of instruction which addresses the child's sensations and conceptions directly, and forms his mind by constantly exercising his powers, instead of making it a passive receptacle, was as original with the one as with the other. But Alcott added a mystic, Platonic tinge to his system, which was not so evident in Pestalozzi's. The most devoted of Pestalozzi's friends and followers in England, James Pierpont Greaves, who first learned of Alcott's experiments from Harriet Martineau on her return from America in 1837, at once recognized his right of succession to the Swiss reformer. Afterwards, when founding a Pestalozzian school at Ham, near London, he gave the establishment the name of Alcott House, and was meditating a voyage to Boston to meet Mr. Alcott, when his death occurred in 1842.¹

¹ This interest of Mr. Greaves, through Miss Martineau's account of Mr. Alcott, is all the more noticeable, because that "*Minerva mediocre*," as Ellery Channing called her, had attacked Mr. Alcott's Boston school in her book on America. For this, early in 1837, Margaret Fuller took her to task as follows:—

"Many passages in your book are deformed by intemperance of epithet. Would your heart, could you but investigate the matter, approve such overstatement, such a crude, intemperate tirade as you have been guilty of about Mr. Alcott, — a true and noble man, a philanthropist, whom a true

As will be seen in the record of his schools at Cheshire, Philadelphia, and Boston, Alcott, like Pestalozzi, was constantly at a disadvantage in dealing with affairs; nor was he so fortunate as to find a coadjutor who could supply the practical ability to match and complete his own idealism. Hence the brief term of his success in every place where he taught, and his frequent removals from town to town and from State to State. But the best men and women everywhere aided his plans, rejoiced in his success, and knew how to pardon his failures.

As this school became known in an ever-widening circle of the friends of education outside of the village, where the experiment was begun, a result followed which is by no means unusual in such cases. Instead of commending their schoolmaster and his accomplished results to the villagers who sent him their children, this increasing fame

and noble woman, also a philanthropist, should have delighted to honor; whose disinterested and resolute efforts for the redemption of poor humanity all independent and faithful minds should sustain, since the 'broadcloth vulgar' will be sure to assail him. He is a philosopher worthy of the palmy times of ancient Greece,—a man whom the worldlings of Boston hold in as much horror as the worldlings of ancient Athens held Socrates. They smile to hear their verdict confirmed from the other side of the Atlantic by their censor, Harriet Martineau." See also the long letter of Mr. Greaves in the "Dial" for October, 1842.

made them more critical respecting the mint, anise, and cummin of daily conformity to their traditional habits; while they neglected those weightier matters of the law in which he was so proficient. There had lately been established in Connecticut by philanthropic and energetic persons, a "Society for the Improvement of Common Schools," which originated in the neighborhood of Mr. May, in the towns of Pomfret, Canterbury, and Brooklyn. This society met in Hartford, May 3, 1827, and elected Mr. Alcott a member, — moved thereto by some knowledge of his Cheshire school. His cousin, Dr. William Alcott, had read to the society an outline of the Cheshire methods, prefacing it with some remarks of his own, suggested by his visits to the school; and the society then requested from the teacher a fuller account of it, which he soon gave. But at this very time the villagers were stirring against him. In his diary for May 17, he says:—

"There seems a decided effort among our opponents to thwart, and if possible destroy, our purposes; for this object, preparations are made for another school. An instructress, Miss Hotchkiss, is engaged, and will commence next Monday, May 21. It is ascertained that several of our scholars will leave, which will diminish our school to less than twenty in number. The concessions we had made, and the reduction of price per

month [Mr. Alcott's salary] from twenty-seven dollars to twenty, I supposed would harmonize the district, and prevent the opening of another school; but a latent spark of enmity is still entertained against us, and the determination is active to make it apparent. Public sentiment in reference to education in this village is very narrow and limited; and my habits and influence are such that I am incompetent to correct it in any other way than by persevering in actual experiment. The villagers will not read, they will not embrace theory, they must have practice; and this too must be fairly tested, of a character which cannot be mistaken, and of such notoriety as to come to them from well-authenticated sources, and forced upon them amid their daily employments. The truth is, they take too little interest to notice what is going forward in a department of education of so little importance as the details of a common school are thought to be. Hence they know little of us, and some of them are not anxious to learn more; they are afraid they shall approve our plans, and that the perfect system of fifty years ago will be found faulty. There is something, they think, in the sentiments of our forefathers which demands implicit belief; we do them injustice by daring for a moment to doubt them. Thus are they deceived by the semblance of truth. The opinions of men are associated with their antiquity; we adopt old opinions for ours; we defend them because we have adopted them, and thus put shackles on our own minds which Time cannot unrivet.

"I had made place this term for more than thirty schol-

ars, whose parents had concluded to send them to me ; but on the suggestion of an individual who had only listened to the tale of a child, immediate preparations were made for another school. And this was all done without the knowledge of the Instructor or a majority of the district. Another school commenced to-day, May 21, according to arrangement by members of the district who are opposed to my measures, and more especially to my price. Miss H. is the instructress, — a young lady who has had experience in teaching, and is as well qualified as most women are who teach summer schools in our villages. Our number of pupils is somewhat lessened, and doubtless will be more so in a few days, when parents shall have made up their minds. This will very much injure our school ; the order, harmony, and friendly feeling which has pervaded the children of the village will be much impaired, and a broad field opened for rancorous feeling, if not inveterate prejudice and hatred. I am the centre of all this commotion of feeling ; were I out of the way, it might subside. And although a few might for a time be unwilling to unite with the others, ultimately harmony would be restored. I am unable to make more sacrifices ; I cannot always contend against avarice and ingratitude. To remain here with the little hope which is before us, seems to be wasting time, efforts, and feelings."

A few days later the schoolmaster received some encouragement to remain in Cheshire and con-

tinue his experiment. The number of his scholars was nearly thirty, while the opposing school received but fifteen. At the same time the commendations which Mr. Alcott received from enlightened persons at a distance, made him feel less keenly the indifference or hostility of his neighbors, whose children he had benefited without their finding it out. But by the first of June the school had dwindled to so few pupils that he determined, after a visit to Wolcott at the end of May, to abandon Cheshire and pursue his experiment elsewhere. And in this connection he wrote an historical sketch of his school, from which passages may be cited:—

“This school assumed its character almost entirely from individual exertion, — in most respects it was my own undertaking, the public sentiment in its neighborhood being graduated upon the popular system in the primary schools of Connecticut. Hence measures to elevate and improve that system have been strenuously opposed, — the fear of innovation hangs like an incubus upon every measure of improvement. A few have supported the Instructor, and shown an interest in his success; these have had a salutary influence on the school. They have supported me in pecuniary appropriations for salary, for class-books, and for altering the interior of the schoolroom; they have likewise been instrumental in preventing the opposition at various

times from going into angry actions. Others know little of the school except from juvenile description and uncertain report. From the condition in which I found the school, it has been raised by slow steps to its present standing. During the first term (November, 1825) little more was attempted than the introduction of a few additional branches of study, except to improve the character of instruction by modes better adapted to the young mind, and attempts to modify habits of thought, feeling, and action by mild and conciliatory measures. These did not entirely fail of the desired results; the unanimous approbation of parents was given to the general proceedings. The ostensible purpose of the Instructor had not yet indicated innovations either in measures or in sentiment. No demand for pecuniary assistance was made upon the bounty of the district.

“These preliminary steps having been taken, and this favorable acceptance obtained, it was thought timely to commence that course of improvement which seemed practicable, and alterations were brought forward. In place of a distant and imperative manner of address, so often conceived to be essential, habits of familiarity and affection were substituted. The first week of school was passed in decorating the schoolroom, devising plans of recreation and amusement, and testing their practical effect. I endeavored to conciliate the good will of pupils by mingling in their amusements, and attempted to make the schoolroom with its exercises a place where they might delight to assemble.

In so doing I succeeded beyond expectation, yet with some complaint on the part of parents. The term was spent in introducing such modes of instruction and discipline as seemed advisable in the present state of things. No call was made for pecuniary assistance other than the stipulated salary (\$27 a month); the Instructor made the improvements from his salary. A juvenile library of a hundred volumes was purchased, and read with much avidity by the scholars. This contributed much to the Instructor's aid, by furnishing excitement and interest during the school exercises. Such measures served also to awaken the public observation in reference to common school instruction, acting upon the minds of a few in the district, and prompting to discussion. Such as had disapproved at the commencement of the term were generally hearty in approval at its close. Under these circumstances commenced the third term, in November, 1826.

“Demands were now made for a change of system in several forms. The Instructor required more salary, alterations in the schoolroom, new class-books, and additions to the school library. Too much at one time was attempted. Public sentiment was not sufficiently liberalized; this was too large a tax on its bounty. The salary was granted, part of the alterations in the schoolroom were paid for; but here the public stopped. The remainder was provided by the Instructor; the schoolroom was arranged as required, class-books purchased, and additions made to the library. But these steps gave offence and opposition commenced. Some

parents refused to purchase books, some took their children from school, some sent them to the Academy ; others bought books, but were evidently dissatisfied. I continued in the course projected ; measures intended to give punctual and seasonable attendance were carried into practical effect, and efficiency was given to the new system of instruction and discipline. The cry of innovation became common, and for a while the school languished. Ultimately a large proportion of the district purchased the class-books and supported the school, — the temporary ferment subsiding. The class-books were found upon trial to be well adapted for instruction, and the pupils improved. The alterations in the school-room were of much value, and the habits of reading and thought which the library induced were very apparent to the people. . . . At the close of the term general favor was shown to the Instructor's proceedings ; a few only, from prejudice and ignorance, continued to oppose, but these were not very influential in the district.

“The fourth term is now going on. The continuance of the school is precarious, depending upon the unsettled opinions or notions of the district. The opposing few are active to carry on their designs. Should opposition put on an angry aspect, the original school will be relinquished. The public mind is sufficiently awake to make something grow out of what has been effected. The labors of eighteen months have not been entirely lost. The improvements which have been made are believed to be these : Connecting pleasing associations

with the school exercises and place of study; raising the salary of instruction to a sum adequate in a measure to the wants and dignity of the profession; modification of the schoolroom for purposes of convenience and despatch in study; class-books introduced which meet the wants of the pupils, and a school library for daily use, embracing much instruction both useful and amusing."

There can be no doubt that all these improvements were made at Cheshire, and that they were far in advance of the practice in most of the common schools of the period. Indeed, it may be doubted if there was any school supported by taxation in New England at that time, which had carried so far the measures since recognized everywhere as essential to the highest success in dealing with the instruction of children, and especially the youngest. The spirit of the kindergarten was manifested in Mr. Alcott's system, although the name was still unknown in America. And the genius of Pestalozzi, which had accomplished so much in Switerland, seemed to be re-embodied in this Connecticut schoolmaster,—for both Pestalozzi and Fellenberg had died during the progress of the Cheshire school. Dr. Bronson had also died; and this was an additional reason why his nephew was willing to leave Cheshire. In the diary for June 6, 1827, we find this entry:

“The Episcopal convention of Connecticut met this day at Hartford. They are expected to devise measures for the continuance of the Cheshire Academy, and to appoint a principal and assistant, and reopen that school, — the former principal, Dr. Tillotson Bronson, being dead, and his assistant, Rev. Mr. Cornwall, not expecting to continue here. New men and measures will doubtless ensue; but at any rate, what the convention will do will affect my school. The commencement of studies at the Academy will be apt to diminish the number of my students: some will send them from the novelty of the thing; others will continue with us, but on the slightest displeasure will withdraw them to the Academy. Another barrier will appear: my plans will militate against Episcopal notions of education, and the exertion necessary to success will be much increased by the rivalry of academical studies. Had I not better leave Cheshire at this time? Will there ever be a more favorable opportunity? Perhaps it may be prudent on the whole to spend the summer term here and leave in the fall. I do not mean to be hasty, nor to take any premature step. Whether I go or stay, I make great sacrifices. In pecuniary matters I have laid up little; my wages have been expended on the school in one way or another.

“During the three full terms which the school has kept, I have expended not less than \$125 for the district, and only about \$150 remains to me for nearly two years’ services. Rev. Mr. Cornwall has commenced a private school at his own house. The Academy is still vacant.

There is some effort making to have me go into the Academy; but I do not choose it, even should it be desired."

The Cheshire Academy was controlled by the Episcopal clergy of Connecticut, as Yale College had always been controlled by the Calvinistic clergy. Mr. Alcott, though bred an Episcopalian and even destined by his mother to take orders in the Church, had already separated himself in sentiment from that communion. In his diary for Sunday, June 10, 1827, he writes:—

"At the Episcopal church in Cheshire Rev. Mr. Paddock of Norwich preached. His object seemed to be to explain and teach the doctrine of the Trinity, as this day by the Episcopalians is called Trinity Sunday. I regard him as a sincere, plain Episcopalian of some talent, ready and zealous to propagate the sentiments of that denomination. His sermon was plain, and to some extent practical. I cannot but regard the popular doctrine of the Atonement by Jesus Christ as erroneous, — taking its rise from the uncertainty and obscurity of his history, and the fondness of the human mind to support as sacred, in matters relating to theology, whatever deviates from the ordinary course of human action. Mankind are prone, from their social nature, to idolize something. In the most remote ages, and in the natural state of mankind, objects of worship were sought; and these have partaken, in all ages, of the

character of the people, — have been graduated to the development of the human mind. In the first state of society, men are conversant only with sensible objects ; hence their idols have always been sensible objects. As their minds become developed, abstract ideas accumulate, and from sensible things men have turned to the worship of something more abstract. The qualities which compose the idea of God are all abstract, entirely disconnected from sensible objects. He is that combination of estimable and powerful qualities, to the conception of which man has attained. Those who at the present day idolize the person of Jesus Christ, asserting him to be God, exhibit the disposition of men in ancient times to deify such of their fellow-men as performed great and magnanimous actions. Having little conception of the human mind, and the adaptation of mental causes to mental effects, they are at a loss to account for such actions upon any other supposition than divine agency. The performers are thought favored ones of God ; by association, they ultimately become connected with God, and are worshipped. Jesus unquestionably was a great and good man, a prodigy of the times in which he lived. He was idolized by some even then. Men were disposed to attribute things new or great or wonderful to the Creator. His doctrines and practice indicated (for the day in which he lived) great acuteness, wisdom, and self-command, — an intimate acquaintance with human nature. And more than all, the Founder of Christianity illustrated and tested its truth himself by a practical exhibition. His

example was added to his principles. His was the best system of ethics which had been offered to man; it was adapted to his situation and wants at the time. But I am not sure that in all respects it is equally well adapted to the present state. I am unwilling to admit that while improvement in every other science is striding forward with rapidity, nothing is to be effected in the all-concerning science of religion. What! shall that which is the sum of everything remain stationary, behind everything else? Shall the science of ethics be neglected, when its practical duties are wanted every day? I cannot persuade myself to admit such things. I hold that the Christian religion is the best yet promulgated, but do not thence infer that it is not susceptible of improvement; nor do I wish to confound its doctrines with its founder, and to worship one of my fellow-beings. If my sentiments are erroneous, I ardently desire to be conducted to truth, wherever it may lead."

When it is remembered that Theodore Parker was not yet seventeen years old, and that for proclaiming such opinions as this, fourteen years later he was excommunicated even by the followers of Dr. Channing, the originality and radicalism of Mr. Alcott will be clearly seen. If not the first, he was one of the first in New England to maintain the opinions here indicated; and these opinions, no doubt, had something to do with the opposition to him among the people of his native State. He left Cheshire in the latter part of

June, 1827, although strongly urged by many of his friends there to remain and continue teaching in a different relation. After leaving, he sums up in his diary the financial results of his life there in terms which would be surprising if the whole course of his after life had not repeated this story of generous hopes, self-sacrifice, and frustrated expectations: —

“*June 25, 1827.* Scholars to the number of thirty or more, at \$3 per quarter, may be obtained in Cheshire; but I think I shall not commence a school again there. Opportunities may offer much more favorable; Cheshire I am sure is not a place where I can effect the most. The common sentiment is not sufficiently elevated there to give my efforts the greatest efficiency, nor my feelings the most sincere sympathy. Avarice and the pride of ancient tradition have taken too deep hold of the common mind to allow it to estimate aright the deeds of benevolence, or the true spirit of native simplicity. With sentiments like these I do not feel called on to wage war. I leave them, though urged to stay, — having spent the labor of eighteen months upon them, with the expenditure of \$125.”

He accordingly withdrew from Cheshire to Wolcott, and there engaged with his father in farm labors, in the interval of visiting schools and friends. On the 8th of August, 1827, he drove from Wolcott to Brooklyn to visit Mr. May,

and there met for the first time Miss May of Boston, his future wife. It was no doubt a case of love at first sight, although neither was then very youthful. We shall soon see the impression produced on the Cheshire schoolmaster, as intimated in one of his sonnets; the corresponding impression on the heart of Miss May will appear, to those who can read between the lines, in this letter of hers to Mr. Alcott, dated Brooklyn, April 9, 1828. They had been providing her brother with a new residence there, and upon leaving the old parsonage, she writes:—

“We have had an engaged winter, dismantling our pleasant mansion and extinguishing our smoke,—the hearthstone is already cold. And I, poor I, feel like a disbanded soldier. I have felt this evening an irresistible desire to talk with you; for having finished here and being about to depart, I am looking anxiously forward for something in which my heart and mind may engage. . . . Your visit to us last summer I think of with pleasure; it is a bright spot in the retrospect that I linger on.”

Not long after this letter, Mr. Alcott again visited Brooklyn, April 21-22, 1828, on his way to Boston to consider a plan proposed to him by the May family for opening an infant school there.

In the series of sonnets written by him in 1881 to commemorate the romance of his affection, this

first one describes the visit of August, 1827, to the Brooklyn parsonage. His quaint expression, "the city's Court," intimates the Boston residence of Colonel May at a place then called Federal Court.

"Auspicious morn, com'st opportune, unbought?
Bring'st thou glad furtherance in thy rosy train?
Speed then, my chariot, following fast my thought,
And distance on thy track the lumbering wain;
O'er plain and hillock nearing her abode,
The goal of expectation, fortune's road.
The maiden waits to greet with courtesy
Her bashful guest, while stranger yet is he;
From friendly circle at the city's Court
She's come to cull the flowers, to toy and play
With prattling childhood, love's delightful sport;
Its smile call forth, to scent the new-mown hay,
Enjoy the wholesome laughter, simple mien,
Of country people in this rural scene."

In the sonnet which follows this (in the volume of 1882, published five years after Mrs. Alcott's death), the aged poet tenderly expresses the sentiments of Miss May, awakened by this first interview with her future husband; and the motto of the sonnet taken from Shenstone intimates its character,—

"So sweetly she bade me adieu,
I thought that she bade me return."

He did not often return to Brooklyn, even when Miss May was there; but through her efforts and

those of her brother he was induced to visit Boston, after a short experience with a school in Bristol, Conn., during the winter of 1827-1828; and his residence in that city brought him into such intimate relations with the May family that after a year or two he was married to this youngest daughter of Col. Joseph May, by her brother, the clergyman, at King's Chapel, in Boston, of which Colonel May was for many years one of the wardens. The ceremony took place May 23, 1830, and on the anniversary of that day, thirty years later, Mrs. Alcott's eldest daughter, Anna Bronson, named for her grandmother, was married in Concord to Mr. John Pratt, a son of Minot Pratt, who had been a farmer in the Brook Farm Arcadia, and was afterward for many years a farmer in Concord. Mrs. Alcott's brother performed the ceremony then, as he had in 1829; but the place was the Orchard House in Concord, where afterward was opened, in 1879, the Concord School of Philosophy, amidst the apple-trees and grapevines, and under the pine-crowned hill.

Among the consequences of the Cheshire school must be reckoned not only Mr. Alcott's self-exile from Connecticut, but his courtship and marriage, his fortunate domestic life, and all that literature with which his daughter Louisa has enriched the world, and delighted the hearts of the children

whom her father was so eager to instruct and amuse. Shortly after their marriage, Mrs. Alcott wrote to her brother, July 25, 1830: "My husband is the perfect personification of modesty and moderation. I am not sure that we shall not blush into obscurity and contemplate into starvation." There were times in after years when this doubt seemed to be on the point of fulfilment; but the end was fortunate, and the wife and mother deserved all the praise bestowed upon her by her husband in his old age. The last of the sonnets of 1881 which relate to his wife and family was this: —

"Dear Heart! If aught to human love I've owed
 For noble furtherance of the good and fair;
 Climbed I, by bold emprise, the dizzying stair
 To excellence, and was by thee approved,
 In memory cherished and the more beloved;
 If fortune smiled, and late-won liberty, —
 'T was thy kind favor all, thy generous legacy.
 Nor didst thou spare thy large munificence
 Me here to pleasure amply and maintain,
 But conjured from suspicion and mischance,
 Exile, misapprehension, cold disdain,
 For my loved cloud-rapt dream, supremacy;
 To bright reality transformed romance,
 Crowning with smiles the hard-earned victory."

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOLS IN BOSTON AND PHILADELPHIA.

AFTER leaving Cheshire and visiting Brooklyn, Mr. Alcott taught, for a few months in the autumn and winter of 1827-1828, a district school on West Street, at Bristol, for a smaller salary than he had received at Cheshire. He began November 6, expecting to continue for five months, which was then the ordinary term of winter schools in the prosperous towns of Connecticut; although that, as he says in his diary, "was a time much too short to introduce a system which requires years to establish." He began with sixty scholars, more than he had ever seen at Cheshire, and his salary was \$23 a month. The influences at Bristol were hardly so favorable as at Cheshire; and he began his work hopefully, but fully prepared for the same disappointment that he had encountered earlier. These extracts from his diary will indicate the course of events:—

Jan. 10, 1828. "A happy state of feeling pervades our little community at the schoolhouse; they are in-

terested and happy. The work of regeneration in their hearts has commenced, and had we time, and the control of them in all their concerns, we are sure to effect all that theologians attribute to the word Regeneration. But we are not permitted to do this; prejudices, strong and inveterate, assail us on all sides; there are only two or three grown persons with whom we can freely converse, and our opinions fully developed would alarm people. Hence a course of prudent compromise is the only hope of success. Dr. Purdee, Dr. Byington, and Mr. Bull [an intelligent instructor in the Centre district] are the only persons to whom my views would be acceptable; and even these are unprepared to receive them without further inquiry."

January 14. "The determination seems active with a few that we shall not succeed, or in other words that their children shall not learn by regular attendance at the schoolroom. It cannot be expected that those who estimate progress in their children by the readiness with which they can spell long columns of words, of whose meaning they know nothing, should approve our plan, or estimate our labor of much worth; for in these things we do nothing, nor do we intend to waste our time in the useless, the positively stupefying process of conning long words from a spelling book, or in committing and reciting rules and sentences of which they know nothing."

January 24. "The influence of kindness, with which the young under my care are treated, begins to show itself in their manners. Their affections are in a good

state, — I know not how long an envious, gainsaying world will permit me to pursue the familiar, affectionate manner in which I have recently treated the scholars. Already it has become a subject of discussion among their parents, — they know not what to think of treating children in so kind a manner."

February 1. "For the last ten days the school has been visited by several persons of the district, all of whom have expressed their approbation of our plan, — leaving the school with impressions more favorable than they had entertained. Besides these visits, we have received those of several instructors and persons from abroad, among whom were Dr. Alcott and two teachers of common schools in Wolcott, who left us with favorable impressions. It is some satisfaction to find our plans becoming subject of discussion, and attracting notice abroad. 'Anything to agitate still water;' and perhaps the maxim may here be well applied."

February 4. "Those dissatisfied with our plans have engaged an instructor and commenced another school this day, with fifteen scholars. Our numbers continue the same, — forty-five, — and unless something occurs to kindle the fire of opposition, this number will remain till the close of the term. The intelligent part of the community support us in most of our plans, especially Drs. Purdee and Byington, Rev. Messrs. Stanwood and Atkins, Tracy Peck, Esq., Deacon Brewster, etc."

February 10. "Wrote a letter to L. Carrington, Esq., Huntsville, Ala., respecting the progress and present condition of the school here, of which he is the prin-

cial patron; to whose house and hospitable family I repair whenever I choose."

February 17. "My moral opinions are subjects of discussion among those who are bound to the faith of antiquity, and determined to support it at all events. The clergyman here, in a recent discourse, alluded to my opinions, attempted to controvert them, and to establish what he called the truth. I cannot bring these men to discuss the points in question with me; they seem unwilling to bring them forward except among their own party. Until the Christian system is brought directly into the details of family and school government, the world must blunder along as it has in all preceding ages."

March 27. "Miss Matthews, who will teach this school next summer, has spent two days with us, preparatory to beginning her school, April 15. We believe she left us with very favorable impressions, expecting to retain so much of our plan as the most opposed will tolerate, and gradually to introduce more as may be expedient."

March 28. "Our term of five months this day expired. I closed the school with regret, but my young company are going into good hands; Miss Matthews takes charge in two weeks, and with her they will go forward and imbibe the spirit of our expedients."

Already, in the preceding year, before visiting Boston, Mr. Alcott was looking in that direction, as the best place in which to continue his plan of

redeeming mankind by reforming the education of children. He made his first actual visit there, however, in May, 1828, soon after closing his own Bristol school. There he made the acquaintance of Mr. William Russell, with whom he was afterward associated in the Philadelphia school; and from Boston he proceeded to New York and Philadelphia for the purpose of examining infant schools in those cities. Returning to Boston the latter part of May, he took charge, in June, 1828, of an infant school for poor children in Salem Street, not far from the church on Hanover Street where his friend Emerson was afterward settled, as colleague and pastor, for several years. For a few months preceding the summer of 1828, he had been in correspondence with Miss May; and during this summer their betrothal, which had been mutually pledged, took the form of a public engagement, with the approval of the father and brother of the lady, of whom some notice should now be given. From a brief summary of her life written by herself in 1872, these facts are taken:—

“I was born Oct. 8, 1800, christened at King’s Chapel by Rev. Dr. James Freeman, and named for my grandmother, Abigail May. My father was Col. Joseph May, my mother Dorothy Sewall, and I was the youngest of twelve children. Born sickly, and nursed by a sickly woman, I have survived all my family. My

schooling was much interrupted by ill health, but I danced well, and at the dancing-school (1812-1814) remember having for partners some boys who afterward became eminent divines. I did not love study, but books were always attractive. In 1819 I went to pass a year with Miss Allyn¹ of Duxbury (daughter of Rev. Dr. Allyn, the parish minister), who assisted me in reviewing my studies; and with her I studied French, Latin, botany, read history extensively, and made notes of many books, such as Hume, Gibbon, Hallam's Middle Ages, Robertson's Charles V., etc. In October, 1825, my mother died. In 1827, while at my brother's in Brooklyn, I met Mr. Alcott, whose views on education were very attractive. I was charmed by his modesty, his earnest desire to promote better advantages for the young. Not an educated man himself, he was determined that the large fund of Connecticut (\$1,000,000) for educational purposes should be used for higher ends than was the case at that time. The same year Dr. Joseph Tuckerman, with Mrs. Minot, Miss Cabot, afterward Mrs. Follen, my sister Greele and others, suggested an infant school in Boston. Mr. Alcott was sent for to organize such a school. This brought him to Boston, and I had further opportunities of becoming acquainted with him."

Mrs. Alcott has not quite done justice to her own agency in establishing the infant school, and

¹ Afterward the wife of Rev. Convers Francis, of Watertown and Cambridge.

providing it with an organizing head. She was visiting her brother in Brooklyn in the spring of 1828, while Mr. Alcott was still teaching at Bristol; and she wrote him there, giving an interesting sketch of village life in Brooklyn, and of her own pursuits, which, as befitted a young lady from Boston, were literary and even metaphysical. She said: —

“Your letter to my brother was handed us by the laughing doctor a few hours after Mr. May’s departure. We had swept the hearth, closed the shutters, and determined to be happy, though the centre of light and heat had departed from our home. Your letter cheered us much. And do let us often be cheered, during this inclement season, by your word and spirit. I promised to say something on the subject of your former letter; but, my good friend, how can I, when you have said all and so well? The maternal orbit so beautifully described, — infantile development so happily exposed, — the moral constitution of God’s Providence so firmly supporting the whole scheme, — I can only subscribe myself ‘a realist’ in your theory.

“I fervently hope that your labors will be appreciated in Bristol, and your success commensurate with your exertions. If prejudice tinctures opinion there as it does here, you may toil seven years — yea, seventy times seven — and not establish truth. My poor brother has spent six of his best years in this place, and has accomplished little. It is discouraging to see the oppo-

sition that is 'heated up' in everything that he professes to them for their improvement in knowledge, in virtue, in personal good. Our Lyceum is dissolved for want of life; and everybody is praying and weeping for his fellow sinners.¹ Even the children at school point at those they have been taught to consider sinners, wagging their heads, — 'I am holier than thou.' This is dreadful, — religion, revelation, their pole star, converted into a beacon to light up their pious pride! My brother would persuade me I lack charity. I confess my cloak is not so large as his, nor so well lined.

"You inquire about my reading. I have read Locke, Stewart, Browne, — the latter twice. But my reading for the last few years has been rather desultory. My health has been so variable, and domestic trials have at times so oppressed my mind, that I have been guided by the taste of the moment as to the choice of a book. We are at present reading 'Napoleon' by Scott. Dr. Channing has reviewed it in his masterly style. He makes Napoleon's greatness to consist in Action, which is his third grade of greatness. His first is moral, his second intellectual. Washington he ranks the greatest, because a moral man; he served no selfish end, and though he made no highroads over the Alps, yet he climbed the mount and saw the Promised Land.

"Pray write me often, and if my letters are not too careless and stupid, I shall be satisfied to keep up this form of friendship; for forms, you know, are the limbs

¹ A Calvinistic "revival" was going on in this Connecticut town.

of friendship, though not its life. And now, my friend, snuff the candle, and pick out the subject matter of this epistle if you can."

The next letter opens the plan of the school in Boston, which led to Mr. Alcott's removal thither. Miss May was still in Brooklyn, whence she writes, April 9, 1828:—

"I wish I was as great a delinquent in all my selfish gratifications as I am in the very desirable one of writing to you, my good friend. . . . There is everything going forward in Boston that is benevolent and ostentatious. Now there is in this great flock a little 'wee lamb' that I wish to have nourished. It is so much easier to be benevolent than it is to be judicious, that I have to guard my heart and rally my judgment before I act. Do help me a little. My friend, Miss Higginson, is about getting up an 'Infant School' for the very poor children. The teacher (who I understand is to be a woman) is to be paid by subscription, and the Managers are to assist. She is desirous that I should engage as manager, and in the mean time wishes me to give her some instructions. Now will you communicate to me some brief plan that will be attended with little expense and great benefit? This is what is wanted. I wish that you were in Boston, that you might aid the good work. I shall return in a few weeks, and hope to add my mite to the treasury of good works. And may I expect to see you there ere the sun of Science has set or his glory departed? Will the plan of your

school in Cheshire suit our purpose for the conduct of this school? Or some modification of it perhaps? Let me hear from you soon, and before I leave Brooklyn.

“Do excuse this hasty production, and believe me, in haste or never so moderate, your friend.”

This plan bore fruit, as we have seen; and Mr. Alcott soon visited Boston, and agreed to take charge of the little school in Salem Street, while arranging for his more important enterprise later. In this also Miss May was interested, and wrote to Mr. Alcott from Boston, as follows, June 18, 1828:—

“We meet so seldom, and our conversation is necessarily so desultory, that I must be excused for venturing to visit you occasionally in this way; more particularly when I have anything to suggest for the furtherance of your ‘prospective plans.’ I have relinquished the idea of ever undertaking anything of this kind in Boston. But I will never cease to feel that I may indirectly be of service to the rising generation; ‘for it is the mysterious law of our nature that none of us can pass through life insulated and solitary, leaving no trace behind, since our influence must be for good or for evil after us.’ I will strive, therefore, that my example may give ardor to virtue and confidence to truth, and even in this state of passivity some may be better because I have lived.

“You wish, I believe, some lady to be associated with

you in your Infant School, which I understand is to consist of boys only. Will you allow me to recommend a lady in every way qualified for this sacred trust?—a Miss Savage, of Salem, the author of ‘James Talbot,’ ‘The Factory Girl,’ etc. She is not engaged at present in any publication. She maintains herself by her needle, and her health suffers for engagements more congenial to her active fertile mind. She formerly kept school in Boston,—in 1816, I think it was. She gave me this little sketch of her plan, which I take the liberty to send you for your perusal, not because there is anything new or great, but because it was the best plan then practised upon. She sent it to me at that time, as I had the care of a Charity School while the established teacher was in the country for her health. I think if this lady could be obtained (that is, if you feel such an auxiliary is necessary to your establishment), she would be exactly adapted to it.

“I am going into the country for a few days, and shall see an intimate friend of hers who can ascertain her mind on the subject, if you would like to have me propose it. Her age is about forty. She is sedate without austerity, cheerful without levity, and has perfect control of her temper and feelings. I wish you to treat me candidly. If you have any other modification of your plan, don’t hesitate to set aside my proposition.

“I return your friend ‘Owen.’¹ Do excuse my keeping it so long. We must rank him with the Abbé

¹ Robert Owen’s “Essays on the Formation of Character.”

Sicard and other philanthropists. May I hope to hear from you this week, as I shall probably go to Hingham or Brookline the next? If visiting is incompatible with your engagements, do not hesitate to place your thoughts on paper. They are particularly valuable to me in this form, as they in some degree become my own."

This suggestion that Miss Savage, "sedate without austerity, cheerful without levity," should be employed, did not entirely meet Mr. Alcott's views; but he responded with his usual courtesy (July 17, 1828):—

"You will place me under still deeper obligations by mentioning my proposed school to your friend Miss Savage, and ascertaining her views about it. Certainly I should esteem myself especially fortunate in receiving the assistance of so accomplished a lady. But must I relinquish the pleasing anticipation awakened a year since, while visiting Brooklyn, of *your* assistance? I must acquiesce if your decision is irrevocable. But I shall hope that you will sometimes visit my little circle in Salem Street. I thought I caught a glimpse of you in that vicinity the other day. Shall I add that only my diffidence prevented me from accosting you there?"

Mr. Alcott had opened the infant school in Salem Street, Boston, three weeks before (June 23, 1828), with seventeen pupils, under a temporary engagement to teach there for three months. But here we must go back a little, and point out the

circumstances attending his former visit to Boston. On the 23d of December, 1827, his diary thus notes the letter of Miss May of the day preceding: "Received a communication of an interesting nature from Brooklyn." Four months later (April 20) the diary contains the following entry:—

"*April 20, 1828.* Set out for Boston, came on to Hartford, and on the 21st took the stage to Brooklyn, arriving in the afternoon; stopped at Rev. Mr. May's, and continued there until the 23d, when I took the stage for Providence, and on the 24th reached Boston; stopping at the Marlborough Hotel on Washington Street.

"*April 25.* Engaged in calling on gentlemen in reference to the establishment of an infant school in Boston; among them were Mr. William Russell, Dr. Coffin, Rev. E. S. Gannett, Mr. Gould, and others. Learned that the ladies of Boston were about establishing such a school by charity, and visited them likewise; saw also Dr. Charles Follen, Professor of Gymnastics, and Miss Cabot, author of the 'Well-Spent Hour' (afterward Mrs. Follen).

"*April 27.* Attended Unitarian meeting at the Federal Street Church. Rev. Dr. Channing discoursed on the value and importance of the Intellect, showing that Christ came to save man from sin, — to save the whole man, not a part, — to save his whole nature, moral, physical, and intellectual. His discourse for this day was confined to the latter topic, — salvation of the Intellect. In the afternoon Rev. Mr. Gannett gave a discourse

on deceitfulness, and the necessity of studying the heart. These discourses were really interesting, inculcating views which I had long entertained on these subjects.

"*April 28.* Dined with Mr. Russell, editor of the 'Journal of Education,' at Roxbury, from whose friendly assistance I am to be much benefited in the contemplated infant school. In the evening, attended a meeting of the teachers of the Franklin Sabbath School. Am much pleased with the plain, common-sense style of manners which prevails among the Unitarian young people. The infant school is a subject of general discussion among the benevolent ladies interested. Made inquiries respecting the location of the infant school, being called on by Rev. J. Tuckerman, who accompanied me. Attended a meeting of the ladies to form arrangements for the school, and was invited to take charge of it for three months, which I accepted.

"*May 4, Sunday.* Heard Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., Unitarian clergyman, in the morning, and Rev. John G. Palfrey in the afternoon, at the Hanover Street Church. Am much pleased with the preaching of the Unitarians thus far. At five this evening heard a lecture on Peace from the celebrated William Ladd."

This was the first opportunity Mr. Alcott had of listening to the famous Unitarian preachers of sixty years ago, but he found himself at once in a congenial atmosphere. A few days later he writes: "I find the improvers of instruction, with few exceptions, young men about my own age, of similar views

and feelings, but men who are less intelligent on the subject of education, especially moral education, than I had supposed. My design is to spend three or more months in the charity infant school, get that under proper arrangement, and then open one in a more central part of the city, for the children of the more intelligent and wealthy people, where the means may be furnished of carrying our plans into more complete operation. This we have encouragement of effecting by autumn. We shall secure the aid and recommendation of Mr. Russell, Dr. Coffin, Mr. Ware, and other enlightened friends of education; and I think we cannot but succeed in this fine moral climate permanently. My health is now improving, and my prospects are more promising than I ought to expect. What will be the result the All-wise God only knows. Act I must somewhere, and Boston seems to me the most favorable place for action of any in our country. Here, more than anywhere else, mind and heart are free to think and to feel. Let me rejoice in the blessings of liberty, but let me honor and not abuse them."

After three weeks in Boston, Mr. Alcott set out for New York, where he arrived May 14; and he spent the next fortnight in examining schools and talking with educators in the two cities of New York and Philadelphia. At an Episcopal

church in Philadelphia, Sunday, May 18, 1828, he made these reflections:—

“What a pompous, heartless form of worship was here exhibited! Nothing natural, original, or spontaneous was permitted to appear. The primitive, beaten track of former generations is thought the only right way among this people, who forget that modes and systems should often be changed to suit the changes of improving society, and that the Spirit alone is essential. In the afternoon I heard a sermon from Dr. Lyman Beecher, of Boston, mostly aimed against the Unitarians, and supporting the Orthodox. ‘Ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth,’—this text he applied to the doubting, the unbelieving, to those in short who do not assent to the full spirit of Calvinism. We need no further proof than we here see, that our professing teachers are mostly intent to build up their own peculiar form of faith. What can be done to turn public attention toward the promotion of human happiness and the cause of human improvement, and to teach them that sectarian notions and exclusive systems can never promote the great interests of man nor the glory of the Supreme Father? Our hopes must rest on the rational instruction of the young.”

On the following day Mr. Alcott called on Rev. W. H. Furness, then a young man and recently settled as Unitarian minister in Philadelphia, where he still lives and occasionally preaches.

Mr. Furness introduced him to the Swedenborgian minister, who taught a school for young ladies, and to Miss Dix, of Boston, who was then much interested in infant schools. She gave him an introduction to Matthew Carey, the Irish bookseller and author, whom Mr. Alcott in his diary describes as "a benevolent gentleman and writer of some note." The friendships formed in Philadelphia at this time led him to settle there as a teacher in after years. Returning towards Boston, Mr. Alcott visited his father's family at Wolcott, and spent a day or two with his cousin, Dr. William Alcott, who sympathized with his plans for reforming the education of young children. He reached Boston May 29, and took up his abode at Newell's boarding-house in Franklin Street. A day or two after, he made this entry in his diary:—

"*June 1, 1828.* In the afternoon visited Miss May in relation to the infant school, for which she has applied as assistant teacher. I am unwilling she should thus engage with the hope of continuing in it when I leave; for I am very desirous that she should assist in the more desirable situation which I propose in a school of a higher order. And there is reason to think that she herself is more interested in the latter situation than in the charity school, and would assist us with pleasure. But perhaps this is indulging a hope which we can

never realize. In the acquisition of this lady as an assistant I think we should obtain that kind of help which is indispensable."

Instead of Miss May, another lady, Mrs. Brush, was appointed, June 5, to be assistant teacher, and to succeed Mr. Alcott when he should leave the charity school. In recording this choice, he says that he is, on the whole, glad that Mrs. Brush was appointed; for had Miss May, the other candidate, been chosen, the society would have claimed her services afterward; "and I am very anxious to secure them myself in the prospective school." "But we may perhaps be disappointed," he adds, "even in this expectation; though I know of no young lady equally intelligent on the subject of infant education, and no one feeling a deeper interest in the welfare of the young."

After Mr. Alcott began teaching the school in Salem Street, and upon the suggestion in his letter of July 17, already cited, Miss May wrote for advice to her brother, Rev. Mr. May, in Brooklyn, desiring to know whether she ought to join with him in his proposed school for wealthy children. Mr. May replied, July 21, 1828:—

"In answer to your inquiries whether you had better unite with Mr. Alcott in the school, I will frankly say

that I see no other objection than the remarks and opinions of the world. A man may bid defiance to these; a woman cannot without the greatest danger. The circumstances of our acquaintance with Mr. Alcott, and his having gone to Boston at my suggestion and with my recommendation, would lead a censorious world to ascribe selfish views both to myself and you, if you were now to unite with him in his school. For this reason, and for this alone, I decidedly advise you to relinquish the plan altogether. You may, and with your active mind and benevolent heart you doubtless will, find other useful objects to labor for, without exciting any unkind remark; and these, however you may think you have been steeled against them, will in some measure embarrass, if not paralyze, your efforts in behalf of Mr. Alcott's school. I am rejoiced to hear that he continues to gain favor; and I hope he will never falter in that good career, — and that, besides favor, he may gain a handsome compensation too. But don't distress yourself about his poverty. His mind and heart are so much occupied with other things that poverty and riches do not seem to concern him much."

The plan was accordingly given up, but of course Miss May's interest in the school was none the less for that reason. From her diary, dated Federal Court, Boston, September, 1828, these passages are taken:—

"In the afternoon, visited the infant school, and passed an hour pleasantly there. These children cer-

tainly improve fast. I spoke kindly to two or three, who were disposed to be noisy and boisterous; they were soon calm and quiet. I engaged one with my microscope, the other in making O's on his slate. There is something in the society of children that is peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of my mind. I love their society when I can unreservedly communicate and associate with them. There is much to elevate without exhilarating.

“*Sunday.* I attended the Chauncy Place Sabbath School, and examined my class of girls in the New Testament. I found them sinfully ignorant of the Christian duties, promises, hopes, and requisitions. I shall therefore confine myself to these for the present in my instructions, as they are advanced enough to understand the morality which Christ taught. I wish to show them that his precepts are practical and imitable. His life and character should be made familiar to them and lovely, and they should solicit his acquaintance. I wish to present instruction on the same subject under different aspects; this will impress the lesson on their minds, and give them variety without division. I love to teach if I can do it in my own way.

“*Tuesday.* My education has been a very defective one. My habits of mind were not early enough formed to be capable of great exertion or long-continued exercise. My reading has been too desultory, my thinking superficial. My taste is good. I had rather take from the fountain-head than imbibe truth from popular authors, who have diluted it that it may be agreeable

to perverted appetites and capricious tastes. I have always tried that my mind should not be idle, — say rather from its very nature it could not be idle, — but I fear in my wish to employ it in something, it has been too busy in what has rather sweetened than strengthened it, — filling it with pleasant images rather than useful realities.

“*Saturday.* Communicated to my friend some thoughts on a subject of peculiar interest, and received an answer partially satisfactory. He read to me two interesting articles from the ‘Journal of Education,’ — a review of ‘Hints for the Improvement of Early Education and Nursery Discipline,’ and ‘Early Education, or the Management of Children with a View to their Future Character.’ These books are for the use of mothers. Mr. C. Francis calls this ‘The Children’s Age.’ It is certainly the harvest of mothers. Looked over my friend’s journal with him. We had a most facetious interview. He sees me under every diversity of character and disposition. I shall perhaps be less susceptible when less absorbed in this interesting connection.”

Previous to these entries in the diary of Miss May, I find pleasing passages concerning a visit to the neighboring town of Hingham, where, amid friends, she received a visit from her lover. He has preserved a reminiscence of this visit of August, 1828, in one of his sonnets, soon to be quoted; but the remarks of the young lady are also worth citing.

Hingham, August 20. "Left Boston at ten o'clock in a little packet for Hingham, which we reached at five o'clock, and found Mr. Brooks's¹ family expecting us, and very hospitably glad to see us. Passed the evening in conversation, and retired early; but sleep forsook my eyes, and slumber my eyelids. I lived over the preceding evening, which had been one of peculiar intense feeling.

Thursday, 21st. "We spent the day delightfully on the rocks and beach, fishing, shelling, getting moss, etc. We had our dinner in a homely style at Mr. Nichols's, who allows people to make every convenient use of his house, but will take no compensation. The day was fine. Ocean and heaven seemed to blend in one expanse of blue. Oh! had I Jubal's lyre, or Miriam's tuneful voice, I should breathe praises of Ocean, who approached us in majestic swells, and retired in solemn dignity; bathing the beach with tears and chanting a requiem in his hollow murmur. The sun, beaming on the waves, which ever and anon kissed in their wild emotion, seemed contesting between smiles and tears. There is an awful enjoyment in ocean scenery that is rather oppressive to me; a sublimity — I can only wonder and adore.

Friday, 22d. "Passed the evening at Tranquillity Grove. What a magic moonlight throws over everything! The most indifferent objects assume a light or shade that gives them interest.

¹ Rev. Charles Brooks, then preaching in Hingham.

'A holy stillness fills the sky,
While evening tunes its vesper song,
And like a sacred lamp on high
The solitary moon is hung.'

This quotation is perhaps from Langhorne, who was a popular poet seventy years ago. Quite as pleasing is the sonnet written in 1881 by Mr. Alcott:—

"Hither, the gray and shapely church beside,
At sandy Hingham, by the sounding sea,
From the disturbing town escaped thus wide,
I'm come, from all encumbering care set free,
To raise the choral song, with friends discourse,
Roam the wide fields for flowers, or seaward sail,
Or to Cohasset's strand repair, where hoarse
Tumultuous surges chant their ceaseless tale;
Or poesy entertain, grave Wordsworth's lays,
Melodious musing childhood's glorious prime,
Shakspeare's warm sonnets or Venetian plays,
Or that sad wizard Mariner's marvellous Rime.
Here in these haunts, this lovers' company,
Sweet Love's symposium hold we happily."

Miss May goes on with her entries in the diary:

Saturday Evening, August 23. "I have passed a pleasant day; rode in the woods and gathered flowers. I found the scarlet pimpernel, or 'poor-man's weather-glass.' This 'wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower' closes at the approach of foul weather, and with equal susceptibility expands at the return of fair weather. Some flowers droop so as to shed the rain; others envelop themselves in the stalk leaves; others languish

and bend, that they need not break. Little monitors! The hand that made you is divine.

Monday, 25th. "Rather impatient for some intelligence from Boston. I shall write to-morrow if nothing arrives. How much I already enjoy in this connection! I hope I am grateful. . . . *Evening.* Nothing from Boston.

Tuesday Morning, 26th. "Have a letter from my friend. Exhibited more pleasure than was consistent with my worldly stoicism. The girls laughed, and declared there was more fire in my eye and warmth in my cheek than they ever saw before. I retreated to my room. My friend says, and reiterates again and again, that we will 'live to make each other wiser, better, happier.' Again, 'Our lives shall be spent in the elevation and advancement of each other.' May our good resolutions be strengthened; may our hearts become sublimated by this union, and our minds exalted; our lives humble, our hopes elevated, our purpose Heaven! I must write to-day.

Wednesday, 27th. "Wrote to my friend Rasselas yesterday. I must write with more care for my diction, chirography, arrangement. I mean to continue this exercise of noting down at least what I do, if nothing more. My friend suggested it, when I left home, and I will try to continue it agreeably. His success has been so great it adds force to all he recommends. One example is worth ten precepts. I shall return, I hope, in a week, and not leave home again for several months."

"Rasselas" (an excellent title for this "Prince of Abyssinia") was well pleased with all that Miss May wrote or read. They read much together; and in another sonnet he describes what was her taste in books:—

"My Lady reads, with judgment and good taste,
Books not too many, but the wisest, best,
Pregnant with sentiment sincere and chaste,
Rightly conceived were they and aptly dressed.
These wells of learning tastes she at the source,—
Johnson's poised periods, Fénelon's deep sense,
Taylor's mellifluous and sage discourse.
Majestic Milton's epic eloquence, —
Nor these alone do all her thoughts engage,
But classic authors of the modern time,
And the great masters of the ancient age,
In prose alike and of the lofty rhyme:
Montaigne and Cowper, Plutarch's gallery,
Blind Hómer's Iliad and his Odyssey."

In a letter of this period Miss May wrote in regard to her reading:—

"If you will not laugh, I will send you my friend Fénelon, whom perhaps you know and love already. This little sketch of his character I very much admired some years since. I send you also a little work which you may have seen, 'Theodosius and Constantia.' The story is highly romantic, though true; but the sentiments of the venerable Langhorne meet my admiration, and, may I add, imitation. I do not care to be original if I can be good from imitation. I send you 'Mason

on Self-Knowledge,' a friend with whom I have associated a little every day. Keep the books and papers as long as you please."

A broader glimpse of Miss May's reading will appear in this charming letter, written from the house of her friend, Mrs. Celia Brooks, of Hingham, during the visit already mentioned. It is dated August 26, 1828, and may be given entire.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — As I approached the desk to thank my friend for his continued proofs of remembrance and affection, I laughingly said to those about me, "Come, girls, give me a text for my sermon!" They shouted, "There's nothing true but Heaven." The emotion it excited in my heart soon revealed itself in my eyes. They called me the "crying philosopher." Let them laugh. I am incapable of writing a comment on such a text at this moment, for I am fully of the belief there *is* something true on earth, and you, beloved friend, are constantly convincing me I am right. I cannot preach on the evanescent joys of life, when I feel myself in the full possession of something so very real as I believe our friendship to be. I will believe these girls have never enjoyed this *real* comfort, this sunshine of life. For Cicero says: "To take friendship from life would be taking the sun from the world. It beams with unclouded radiance on our moral path, and is itself warmth and beauty to the very path along which it invites us to proceed. He who loves a friend is too rich to know what poverty and misery are."

"Celestial Happiness, where'er she stoops
To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,
And one alone, — to make her sweet amends
For absent Heaven, — the bosom of a friend;
Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft,
Each other's pillow to repose, divine."

You have taught me there is truth and sound philosophy on the earth. The climate is not too cold for truth and love. I shall practise upon this belief until you remove the bandage from my mental vision which friendship, not love, has wound about it. Virtue alone is stable, because virtue alone is consistent. I will enjoy those things I feel to be substantial, and which from their nature must continue and increase. I do not expect to gather flowers all my life. There is much to wonder at and adore in the rougher formations of nature. I love the trials to which we are exposed. They elicit powers which are so latent they seem not to be there,—powers which strengthen by exercise and polish by friction.

I am enjoying myself abundantly walking on the beach and rambling in the woods. The colorings are delightful. I wish you by my side when revelling in Flora's kingdom. It is a new creation,—a further revelation of God's love and providence. Your friend Thomson loved these little emblems of virtue. Herbs were planted for the use of man; flowers bloomed for his instruction. They must not be neglected; and when opportunity favors we will together pay our tribute to Flora and her suite. . . . I do not allow myself any-

thing like seclusion. I came here to make others happy, and in doing so I shall in a good degree secure my own happiness. Whether I succeed or not, I don't know. But our moralists tell us that the happiness of virtue consists not in any ulterior good it may procure, but in the love and practice of it. It consists not in the dowry which virtue brings, but in herself with all her loveliness.

I shall probably return on Tuesday next. You need make no apology for your MSS. They are full of entertainment and instruction; and were they not, it would be a pleasure to me to read what you think it worth while to write. Am I not zealous? This may be my sin. You shall correct by all the temperance you choose to exercise, but I love to see zeal in a good cause. And I will apply one of Jeremy Taylor's beautiful illustrations to my case: "So long as the flame kindles and the light shines, so long does the mind of man stand close to the altar and wait upon the sacrifice. The river that runs slow, and creeps by the banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollownesses, and dies with diversion; but when it runs with vigorousness and a full stream, it breaks down every obstacle, stays not to be tempted by little avocations, but runs into the sea through full and useful channels."

I am leading you I know not where. I cannot help being impressed with the idea which your letters and conversation invariably leave on my mind, that you are a *trembling believer*. You don't doubt me, but you *don't*

realize, etc. Now this is a spirit you must exorcise. I realize and am in the full enjoyment of all which such a reality can afford me. I close by quoting Montaigne, who, in trying to describe the affection he felt for his friend, said, "When I ask myself whence it is that I feel this joy, this ease, this serenity when I see him, it is because it is *he*, it is because it is *I*; and this is all I can say."

The character of this lady will sufficiently appear from her letters. There is in existence, of the same date or a little later, a character of Mr. Alcott himself, written to Miss May by his cousin, Dr. William Alcott, then of Wolcott, where the two cousins had long lived side by side. Dr. Alcott wrote, September, 1828:—

"After a liberal abatement for defects, hitherto inseparable from human nature, and too frequently associated with what is termed genius, you will find your friend's mind an original one. He is a pupil in the school of Nature, — an ardent philanthropist, theoretically and practically; seeking distinction, perhaps, but seeking it only in the great and godlike labors of investigating truth and promoting human happiness. You will find him contemning wealth and externals in themselves considered; liberal and charitable, almost to a fault; friendly when he professes himself so, and seeking the good of those who from ignorance or intention injure him."

In copying this passage in his diary from a letter written by Dr. Alcott to Miss May, Mr. Alcott observes:—

“Thus the pencil of friendship paints. Would the original were like the copy, would that the coloring were not too high! What he has said I am, let me be emulous to be. With this for my standard of imitation, and with the influences of the gentle being with whom I am to spend my days, what may I not become? Aid me, thou God of Love! to improve my opportunities, to turn all the favors of Thy grace to the formation of character,—to assimilate myself to Thee! Aid her to be all that Thou and she desire; aid us both in the progress of life and felicity!”

In his diary for Sept. 21, 1828, Mr. Alcott enters these observations:—

“At Colonel May’s. With the family of this benevolent man I was already acquainted,—with S. J. May of Brooklyn, and Mrs. Samuel Greele of Boston, the active friend and adviser of A. This family is distinguished for urbanity and benevolence, for native manners and nobleness of soul, for moral purity and general beneficence. A. gives me this character of her mother, whom she loved with all the ardor of her heart, and under whose influence she imbibed much of her qualities, and drew forth the best of her spirit:—

“Her most striking characteristic was her affection for her husband and she adored her husband and

children ; she loved the whole human family, and went about doing good. Her attachments were strong, her sufferings proportionately severe. She was constantly solicitous that her daughters should be educated as fit companions for man. She was reserved in her deportment ; she loved the doing of a good action better than the describing it. She never said great things, but did ten thousand generous ones. Her heart was all tenderness, — a tenderness stealing through the sluices of benevolence and softening every aspect of her character. No success of her friends ever reached her knowledge that she was not glad, and showed her gladness in her eyes ; and no misfortune ever solicited commiseration that she did not relieve or participate by her generosity. Her life was a series of kind compliances, virtuous purposes, energetic exertion. She looked well to the ways of her household, and ate not the bread of idleness ; she opened her mouth with caution, and on her tongue was the law of kindness.’ ”

Mr. Alcott then goes on to say, —

“ I can in some degree realize the character of this good woman from her influence on her children. It was this influence which made our A. the affectionate friend, the disinterested companion, the ardent lover. It was this that imparted to the original strength of her mind its energy and independence, to her heart its delicate sensibilities and firm purposes.”

In this same month of September, on Sunday, the 28th, Mr. Alcott heard, apparently for the first

time, his friend Emerson. The brief entry in his diary is as follows: "Attended the exercises at Chauncy Place Sunday-School; the number of scholars near seventy, — prospects on the whole encouraging. Heard a sermon from Rev. Mr. Emerson on the Universality of the Notion of the Deity, — a very respectable effort." It was at this church in Chauncy Place, but not in this building, that Emerson's father, Rev. William Emerson, preached; but the son was only occasionally preaching there, as he did in other pulpits, where the services of a young substitute or candidate happened to be in demand, and he did not preach regularly in Boston until the early part of 1829. Mr. Alcott's acquaintance with him did not begin until some years later. The young schoolmaster was more in the habit of listening to Dr. Channing and his colleague, Mr. Gannett; but he was not specially attached to any church, and was apt to criticise those who spoke from the pulpit. In October, 1828, his diary reads: —

"Heard a sermon from a stranger at Dr. Channing's on 'Brotherly Love.' The preacher seemed a well-intentioned man, but unable to arrange his thoughts to produce effect upon hearers. His manner was labored and unnatural, his thought commonplace. I am dissatisfied with the general preaching of every sect, and with the individuals of any sect. The style of preach-

ing among the Unitarians, as regards thought and manner, approaches nearest my views; but even this, it seems to me, is very objectionable. There is too much merely doctrinal, too little of practical thought. Religion, after all, is not made sufficiently rational, spontaneous, and social. Duty is too much involved in belief, — theory and form are more than practice, than intelligent feeling and action. The pulpit is not sufficiently adapted to every-day life. Preaching is too much an affair of another life, teaching men how to die rather than how to live. It takes the thoughts of men too far from themselves, — to heaven rather than to the concerns of earth, the employments given us by our great Employer. Instead of studying the nature and purposes of God in the revealed works of creation and Providence, they lead us through a labyrinth of theory, of bookwork, far away from the ever-present and all-pervading Deity. They lead us to what man has said or thought, and recorded in books, rather than to what He who made man has recorded in living characters, in the things of creation, providence, and redemption. Christianity is emphatically a system of Redemption, or, to give the thought a more modern aspect, a system of Education. Its author is a Redeemer in the same sense that an instructor is the redeemer of his pupils, — by exerting an influence upon their mind and heart, which forms their characters for virtue. The great error of preachers consists in their incorrect estimate of human nature, and of the power of external means in the formation of character. They give man too

many precepts, too few illustrations. They keep him ignorant of his own nature (as they too often are themselves), and then blame him as intentionally vicious in his mistaken means of obtaining happiness. They teach too much the commandments of men, — drink too deep of the spirit of earth. Instead of being practical members of society, they are too often raised above it. And as the blind become leaders of those more blind, the corresponding catastrophe follows. It is not the precocious creation of character by arbitrary influences which can give moral permanence and harmony to mankind. Our progress to be continuous must be natural, — the progress of nature, the development of our own resources. It must be the impulse of the divine energy; man must not hasten it, he must not interrupt it. His business is to take every obstacle from the path of its advance, — permitting the author of life and of the living to form fit characters in his own appointed way."

It will be seen from these sentences that Mr. Alcott in youth was a follower of the inward light, and had adopted what Sir William Davenant called "an ingenious Quakerism." His system of education was but the development of these ideas; and he believed that children, even from infancy, could be trained to open their minds for divine influences as readily as for those which ordinarily are presented to them. Thus, in leaving the infant school in Salem Street in October,

1828, as he had expected to do, he writes in his diary:—

“I shall leave this school in a few days to Mrs. Brush; continuing, if requested, to spend an hour or two there daily for a few months to come. The children are now in a state where peculiar management is needed; they are considerably advanced in the awakening process; they need that the thoughts and feelings which have been elicited should be directed to proper purposes. The difficulty of management is thus much increased. A knowledge of the human mind and heart alone can give this direction; the spirit of progress can only be preserved by natural means,—the simple and gradual regulation of influences upon the whole infant being. I find every resource of my mind called in demand by these children. When will the friends of the young regard the full value of ‘influences,’—when will they see to it that these are purely moral in their effects?”

With such views Mr. Alcott found himself in harmony with Dr. Channing, from whom he quotes, Oct. 12, 1828, the drift of a sermon heard that day. The great Unitarian preacher sought to remove the superstitious associations that had gathered around the office of a Christian minister. He defined the duties of that office, and made them of the same character as those of all other moral instructors. The mother, he said,

is a minister in her nursery, by the influence which she exerts upon her children. Parents are preachers, teachers of all classes are preachers; so are the intelligent by their influence over the ignorant. All men are preachers to each other. The clergyman is only a teacher of a higher order, inasmuch as the subjects of his instruction are elevated above all others,—but still a teacher, a man, seeking to enlighten the common mind by the rational exposition of truth, and thus prepare men to work out their own progress. Upon this abstract of the sermon Mr. Alcott thus remarked :

“I like the morality of Dr. Channing, because it is intelligent, liberal, practical; it allows all men to be teachers, ministers, priests. It entrusts salvation to the personal effort of all; it does not make the preacher the author of individual happiness or misery; does not invest him with the power of saving mankind, or make him responsible to the Judge of all for their characters. It makes every man the pupil of every other mind; makes every man responsible for himself alone in the use which he makes of all the means of improvement. There is no mystery about duty; there is no mystery about the person or the office of those who teach us the means of duty one day in seven. They possess no divine right to prescribe a given course; they are men, like others. They should be regarded as co-operating with mothers, with teachers of every class, with society in its general influence, with

the providences of Nature. This is the system of Jesus Christ for the Christian education of the world, — the great purpose of the Supreme Instructor."

It will easily be seen that opinions of this sort did not recommend Mr. Alcott to the priestly class, even among the Unitarians, — still less to the clergymen of his own church and of the stricter sects at that time. But the course of events has brought almost all Christians to a similar view of the clerical office, and the importance of early education.

While making arrangements for his new school in Common Street about the middle of October, Mr. Alcott got a letter of congratulation from his mother upon his engagement with Miss May: —

AFFECTIONATE SON, — We received your letter dated September 5, and read it with much pleasure and satisfaction. We rejoice, and I trust are thankful, for the prosperity of our children, — and particularly for you, as you have been a man of misfortunes, — and hope your prospects will not raise you so high as to induce you to forget that you, as well as others, are subject to disappointments. Every circumstance appears favorable to all of us. Dr. William says that he is surprised when he reflects upon your prospects a few years since, and your present ones. Your future prosperity, my son, depends upon your future conduct. I am assured that that will be good. Tell Miss May that I thank her for

her friendly letter. I should like to write her; but my poor education, and the habit of writing but little, must be my reason for omitting it. I hope to see her one day, and communicate my thoughts and feelings to her by conversation. I know you are enjoying life with your friends in Boston, and particularly with her. I hope you have considered well, and decided in your own mind concerning your companion for life, and from your usual character I have no reason to doubt but what you have. Give my love to your companion, and write us when we may expect the happiness of seeing her and you."

Mr. Alcott had submitted pages of his diary to the inspection of Miss May, who in a letter dated Boston, Oct. 28, 1828, thus writes:—

"Your journal has been most interesting and valuable to me. You have revealed the man I have ever wished to know, and the being I thought alone I could love. It would be but generous in me to continue my diary. It is not through fear that you should descry my weaknesses that I have faltered, but the force of circumstances. My mind takes strong inclinations; my dislikes are antipathies, my preferences loves. Your journal furnishes me with the key to your mind and heart, and I never use it without finding what I expected,—intelligence and affection.

"You shall know my defects as fast and as far as I have the opportunity to exhibit them. Were you ever to avail yourself of this power to my prejudice, I should

still think it the right course, and this one of its incidental defects. A man should know when he has obtained the affection of a woman whom he wishes to be his future companion; should he not have the satisfaction to know what his security for future happiness is? If he is sure of that, it is his own fault if mutual happiness is not the result. When I speak of Love, I do not mean that flippant little god to whom the votaries of fashion address their prayers, whose wings they sometimes borrow and flutter through the bowers of ideal roses and lilies; nor those more careless pursuers of pleasure who 'kneel at every shrine, and lay their heart on none.' No, — I mean that clear though deep current of affection which, stealing silently, unobserved, into all the recesses of the heart, issues thence only in the pure, healthy rills of kindness, tenderness, good-will, devotion. This is what I feel for the only being whom I ever loved as companionable, or with whom I could associate in the heavenly tie of matrimony."

Mr. Alcott gave up his Salem Street school October 17, and on the 20th, Monday, began in Common Street with six boys. The diary says:—

"I found these children very intelligent, and succeeded in making them happy while at the schoolroom. The remarks of their parents who came with them regarding the purposes of the school were generally gratifying. My patrons are from the most intelligent, wealthy, and worthy class of society in Boston. They seem sincerely interested in the rational education of

their children,¹ and estimate my plan of instruction very correctly. I think they will allow me time to develop its results.

"October 22. Four more children have appeared. Thus far all have been very happy ; they are generally docile, and several of them can read and spell with considerable facility. They are the very class of children I have desired ; excellent materials for the study of Nature in her simplicity and innocence. I wish to philosophize upon the pure workmanship of the Creator, — to aid in preserving its symmetry and beauty."

At this time Bronson Alcott was almost twenty-nine years old, full of hope, happily situated, and delighting in the city which appeared to welcome him so cordially. Sunday morning, October 26, after listening to a sermon from Dr. Channing on the text, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," he enters in his diary this glowing sentence:—

"There is a city in our world upon which the light of the sun of righteousness has risen, — a sun which beams in its full meridian splendor there. Its influences are quickening, invigorating the souls which

¹ The names and ages of the first ten children were: Peter Oxenbridge Thacher, five years; Samuel S. Greele, four; Robert F. Rogers, four; Samuel H. Russell, five; Austin Kuhn, four; Edward Bangs, three; Charles John Higginson, six; Francis C. Williams, four; Henry T. Davis, five; . . . Reynolds, ten. The tuition was \$28 a year.

dwell within it. It is the source whence every pure stream of thought and purpose and performance emanates. It is the city that is set on high; it cannot be hid. It is Boston, whose morality is of a purer and more elevated kind than that of any city in America. Channing is its moral teacher; his system of instruction is that of Christ, — the system of Redemption, of Improvement, of Happiness. Future generations will hail Channing as a benefactor. His name will go down to posterity among the bright and shining ones, — those who have elevated the system of things toward the purposes of the Creator. Channing's school is but the school of Christ, adapted to the present progress of society."

This was one side of the picture, and not much exaggerated. But now for another side. On the same day, Mr. Alcott, with Miss May, dined at the house of Madam Scott, her eccentric great-aunt; and the diary gives this record:—

"This old lady is known as the former wife of Governor Hancock, and still considers herself invested with the honors of Revolutionary respect. She is fond of society, even at the advanced period of life to which she is arrived; to enjoy it, she is constantly admitting persons of her acquaintance to visit her, being too much absorbed in her own madamism to call on others. Such persons she receives to her august presence, as she sits in her chair; their happiness appears to consist in attendance at her house, and in the entertain-

ment which she there offers them, — herself, her table, her wine, her association with Governor Hancock, whom she speaks of by the familiar name of ‘My Mr. Hancock,’ still retaining her primary idea of possession. She considers herself still invested and entitled with the honors of the former mistress of his mansion on Beacon Hill. (We were the sole guests on this occasion; seated in her chair, she received us familiarly, and with courtly pleasantry rallied myself on the honor of this new alliance with her name). She seems to be a lady of very little force of mind, depending upon the idea of her connection with Mr. Hancock as the basis of her fame and greatness. Her manners are very abrupt, though apparently very sincere; and the sincerity and amiableness of her disposition make her interesting even in her foibles. Dinner was announced. The servants did not come at her call. She exclaimed, with all the peevishness of pampered age, ‘Serpents! why are ye so long in bringing the dinner?’ The dinner was brought; we sat down. The old lady would have the pudding first; she would have the old fashion, for it was the best. She helped me most bountifully, — two large pieces of her fine large apple pudding were intrusted to my disposal. A. gave me some of her fine cider sauce for it. ‘If — was only there, how he would love some of it; she should like to compare some of her sauce with Mrs. May’s, and see which was the best.’ A. did not put enough of it on my pudding, I must have some more; she would help me herself, and give me enough. She requested A. to reach

her the bowl of sauce. A. offered to help me, without complying with her wish as expeditiously as she desired. 'Give me the sauce,' she exclaimed, in a tone of heightened impatience; 'he shall have enough, I say.' The sauce was handed, and she dealt it out by spoonfuls. The roast beef was placed upon the table; she would carve herself. 'Governor Hancock's wrist was lame, she learned to carve when living with him; she had not forgotten how, only her less strength made her less successful than she wished.' But she would carve, and would carve in the old-fashioned style. The knife was dull; she had sent it to be sharpened, but it was duller than ever. The old-fashioned way of carving, 'altogether the best,' was to cut sidewise of the piece, — crosswise was an innovation of later times which she did not approve. The old lady commenced with some difficulty; she succeeded in furnishing me with a piece or two of her fine roast beef. 'Was it tender? Was it done enough?' I assured her it was very good, — for indeed it was, according to my education and taste. She ate no meat herself, — the broth only, with bread or potatoes. I despatched her two first slices of roast beef. The knife was indeed too dull to carve with. 'Where was the file?' It was procured. 'Would I sharpen the knife?' I drew it across the file a few times, and offered to help myself to a piece of her fine roast. 'No, she would do it herself.' Mention was made by A. of my engagement at the Sunday-school at a quarter-past one o'clock. 'She would not go,' she said, 'and lose her dinner, — the children might all go to

Old Nick first.' I helped myself to another piece, and at the ringing of the church-bell arose to leave the table. 'Was I going? I must come again, come and take tea with her, — come when I could eat without being in a hurry.' I left for the Sunday-school."

Between this old lady—who said that she married Governor Hancock for his station, and Captain Scott, her second husband, for love—and the saintly Channing, there was a wide difference; but one was as truly representative of Boston sixty years ago as was the other.

Mr. Alcott's little school increased from ten pupils, all boys, in October, to twenty at the end of the quarter in January. In February he formed a plan for admitting girls also, and made arrangements for removing from his somewhat inconvenient schoolroom on the second floor in Common Street, to a room on the ground floor near St. Paul's Church, Tremont Street. His circular to parents was as follows:—

"Mr. Alcott proposes to connect with his school for boys a department for the instruction of girls of similar ages, to be under his general superintendence, with the individual attention of a female associate. The location to be central. Should the proposition be favorably regarded by his patrons and their friends, arrangements will be made for the reception of these children some time in April next."

This plan was not immediately carried out; but when it took effect, Miss Elizabeth Peabody became associated with Mr. Alcott in the management of this early experiment of co-education in Boston,—a fact which led, some years later, to the publication by her of “The Record of a School,”—namely, of the Temple School in 1835–1836, of which mention will be made hereafter.

During 1828–1829 the Boston school went forward with some success. It was removed to more convenient rooms in April, 1829, and the spring term opened on Tremont Street, near St. Paul’s Church, with thirty children, whose tuition was eight dollars a quarter, and with the prospect of ten or fifteen more before the close of the term. In this same month, April 7, Mr. Alcott heard the news of his father’s death at Wolcott, and visited his mother there for a few days (April 13–17); and on his return to Boston spent a few days with Miss May in Brooklyn, where she was then living and taking care of her brother’s children. This absence of his future wife from Boston was a trial to both of them; and their correspondence, which was frequent, was insufficient to preserve that entire unity between them which is so seldom seen even in those well mated. In his diary Mr. Alcott reproaches himself, saying, “I do not yet give my companion all the sympathy and kindness

which her delicate nature requires; could I be with her constantly, I should better understand her sympathies, and touch them as they need." A later entry in the diary, Dec. 19, 1829, continues this self-reproach:—

"Wrote to my companion at Brooklyn. I am apprehensive that my not writing earlier will make her anxious. For, unworthy as I am of her love and confidence, the proofs of her disinterested affection have been too often given to leave room for further doubt. I have too often pained her sensibilities by allusions to doubts and fears,—one of those habits of my mind which, though necessary in the pursuit of truth, is perhaps questionable in the delicate expression of love, where the language of confidence is invariably demanded by the heart. I will try to avoid not only such expressions, but the feeling which allows it,—for to the most reasoning woman a reasoning love is uncongenial and suspicious. Perhaps a woman must trust, and find her happiness in this, more than our sex can."

These extracts point to a questioning and despondent turn of mind, which, when seen in so hopeful a person as Mr. Alcott, usually indicated ill-health; and this was indeed his condition frequently during the early years of teaching. He had thrown off his long illness at Cheshire, and he ascribed his complete recovery there to the habit of bathing in a running stream, as he had

done in his boyhood at Wolcott; but "I was restored," he says, "after a fearful loss of vigor and spirits." Some return of this dispiriting condition may be traced in his journal in 1829-1830; but the last instance of it which will be cited is this entry for Jan. 25, 1830:—

"Heard from my companion in Brooklyn. Our marriage in the spring seems to me, on the whole, warranted by existing circumstances. Were none but myself involved in the consequences, I should not hesitate a moment. But the happiness of another may be involved by the decision. But are not the ills of life, as well as its happinesses, alleviated by united sympathy and affection, and can separation avert their presence? Have I not rather listened to a deceitful delusion, when I imagined I was obeying the dictates of reason? Why should we be longer separated in anticipation of distant and dubious evils, when the miseries of absence are the most certain, the most increasing, we can feel? Providence bestows his bounties equally upon all, and it will be our folly alone if we do not obtain our share. In hope, when founded upon virtue, there is safety; and in virtue combined with love there is both safety and happiness, though external ills assail, and worldly circumstances oppose."

The marriage took place, as already mentioned, May 23, 1830; and Mr. Alcott continued his Boston school until the following December, when

being invited under auspicious conditions to open a school among the Quakers of Philadelphia, at Germantown, he removed thither, and there his two eldest daughters were born. He had already come into communication with friends in Philadelphia through his interest in education, which was a subject much discussed at that time in Philadelphia as well as in Boston. Among his correspondents was Mr. Roberts Vaux, a distinguished citizen, who offered a prize for a treatise on education, for which Mr. Alcott competed, and concerning which there is an interesting letter by Mrs. Alcott to her brother: —

Boston, July 25, 1830.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — You kindly inquire about the essay. It has not, nor probably will receive the premium. But Mr. Alcott has received a letter from Mr. Vaux, one of the principal men there, which is a hundred dollars to a man who expects to get his living by the labor of his brains. I must give you an extract, lest you may think I have appraised his opinions too highly. “Thy essay I have attentively read; it afforded me more pleasure and instruction than anything of the kind which has come under my notice. It is strongly marked by practical wisdom and pure Christian philosophy, and is worthy a place in every family in our country. It is my wish to see thy admirable opinions in print. Allow me to suggest to you their publication in some form for the information of our

fellow-citizens. Should it be published as a tract, the happiest consequences would flow from it. I will do all in my power to have it widely spread in Pennsylvania. I will use every means to aid in the diffusion of such doctrines as thy communication teaches, assured that their adoption by parents and teachers would administer incalculable blessings to the rising generation."

Mr. Vaux, from all we can learn, is the Brougham of that part of our country. Mr. Alcott had carried his essay to Mr. Jenks previous to the reception of this letter. He is in doubt what to do. In the Examiner it will be rather too exclusive, I am afraid. It will hardly be accessible to a certain class of minds who through another channel can be most successfully addressed.

Writing from Philadelphia, Dec. 26, 1830, Mrs. Alcott gives this account of the circle to which she was there introduced:—

"Among our new acquaintance, those most important to us are Mr. Roberts Vaux and family, Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Robert Walsh, Mr. Erskine Hazard and wife, Dr. Rush, and Dr. McClellan.¹ These are all in-

¹ The persons above mentioned, with others whose names occur in Mr. Alcott's diary, were among the first citizens of Pennsylvania. Roberts Vaux, whose son, Richard Vaux, has much distinguished himself in the management of prisons, was at this time President of the School Board in Philadelphia, and of the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Schools. Dr. George McClellan was a distinguished physician, and the father of General McClellan. Dr. James

telligent, interesting people, and disposed to favor Mr. Alcott's purposes. Besides these, there are Rev. Mr.

Rush was the grandson of the famous Dr. Rush, and himself took high rank in his profession. James Taylor was a Scotchman, one of the first men in Philadelphia to follow the lead of Dr. Priestley, and establish a Unitarian congregation,—a man of wealth and wide acquaintance. Dr. Keagy, of Swiss descent, had been a practising physician in Baltimore, afterward the teacher of a Pestalozzian school at Harrisburg, and for a while Superintendent of the Philadelphia House of Refuge, before taking charge of William Penn's school. John Vaughan was of the English family of that name, and emigrated with Dr. Priestley at the time, as Coleridge said,

“ When roused by that dark Vizard, Riot rude
Had driv'n our Priest over the ocean swell.”

Vaughan himself was a pupil of Dr. Aiken, the father of Mrs. Barbauld, and belonged to that set of which the Aikens in England were a good example. Robert Walsh was of Irish descent, a Roman Catholic, and therefore somewhat opposed to common school education; an excellent writer, and then quite eminent. Dr. W. H. Furness, another of the circle, and the pastor of Taylor and Vaughan, was in 1830 a young clergyman, a schoolmate in Boston of Waldo Emerson, and his intimate friend through life. He was then the only Unitarian minister in Philadelphia. Mr. Hazard was a descendant of Dr. Belknap's correspondent, Ebenezer Hazard, who made the first collection of American State papers,—he was himself an overseer of the Philadelphia Almshouse, and much interested in education. Another of the circle, Mr. Bolmar, was a French teacher of intelligence and amiable manners. Reuben Haines, of Germantown, was a wealthy Quaker, much interested in practical matters, in business and agriculture, and particularly devoted to cattle-breeding and to the study of natural science. His death, in 1831, had

Carll, a Swedenborgian minister, interested particularly in infant schools, having introduced these into the city, — and Dr. Keagy, who has the care of the Friends' School founded here by William Penn himself. I am very much pleased with the society thus far. There is a weekly meeting on Saturday evenings, established by a Dr. Wistar several years since, called the Wistar Party, and continued in remembrance of him. It is for social and intellectual purposes, and strangers are invited and people brought together under the most favorable circumstances for the interchange of courtesies and conversation. Mr. Alcott and Mr. Russell attended the last one, and came away wholly satisfied with this truly benevolent and effective means of introducing strangers to the most respectable and intelligent citizens. Indeed

much to do with the ill success of Mr. Alcott's school, of which he had been the chief promoter.

I find in Samuel Hazard's "Register of Pennsylvania," a weekly newspaper published in Philadelphia during 1831, many indications that the subject of education, and particularly the systems of Pestalozzi and Fellenberg were much discussed in that city. The Register for June, 1831, publishes in full a lecture by F. A. Ismar (a Swiss who had come to America), containing an elaborate description of Fellenberg's school at Hofwyl, which was then in full tide of success. Mr. Ismar was one of Mr. Alcott's friends, and is mentioned several times in the journal. He was placed at the head of an agricultural seminary at Bolton Farm, in Bucks County, Penn.; and among his supporters were William Meredith, Anthony Morris, J. R. Tyson, G. Emerson, and Thomas C. James, who speak of him in a letter dated June 1, 1831, with high praise.

we have not known what it is to be in the 'land of strangers;' for my own part, I know not the feeling, nor can I, while enjoying the protection and confidence of my husband. The days of my married life have been bright days."

The school at Germantown could not be opened until May, 1831; but in the mean time the Alcotts took up their abode in that suburban town, which is now a part of the great city. While waiting for his school to open, Mr. Alcott made these comments on Philadelphia, as he saw it in 1831:—

"Compared with Boston, there seems to exist here all the plainness and simplicity of manners for which the city is distinguished. The subjects most cultivated, and on which conversation generally turns, seem to be the physical sciences; while those most discussed in Boston are the metaphysical and ethical. The influence of the Friends upon conversation, manners, and thought is apparent; subjects connected with utility, comfort, and practical morals seem most congenial to their minds. Economy and utility, rather than expenditure and taste, seem the popular idols; these, however, are all frequently united in a style of magnificence, where expenditure seems more conspicuous from the unusual plainness into which it is wrought. The wealthy dwell in expensive houses, and form an aristocracy of which wealth rather than intelligence is the prominent quality. Active benevolence is most indi-

cated in the number and character of the benevolent institutions, in which Philadelphia ranks among the most munificent. The Calvinists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians are the most popular sects. The Friends are a large and respectable body, but have lately separated into divisions,— the Orthodox and the Hicksite, or Liberal, Friends. There are also societies of Unitarians, Swedenborgians, Mennonists, and so-called Christians. The Liberal Quakers are more numerous than the Orthodox; they are likewise the most intelligent and influential, and stand in the same relation to the Orthodox that the Boston Unitarians do to the Orthodox Congregationalists."

In Germantown, where Mr. Alcott soon went to reside, he found a singular school, which he thus described: "The manual labor academy contains thirty-three pupils, who are defraying by their labor the expense of their education. It is under the control of the Orthodox, and many of the pupils are preparing for the ministry; their employment, besides their studies, is agriculture and carpentry; recently the making of hat-boxes has been introduced, and is now the chief employment. Their labor is divided minutely,— one pupil planing boards, another sawing them, another driving nails, etc., so that the learning of a trade is altogether beyond their reach, and one of the most important objects of education is thus left out. But

the principle of making labor defray the cost, even in this imperfect form, is of great importance. Of such institutions there are already ten in the United States." Mr. Alcott was not favorably impressed by the superintendent, — Rev. George Junkin, — "a small, stout man, who handles a plane, wields a saw, and writes a sermon with equal ease; but few, I think, would confide in him as a teacher of morals and religion." Mr. Alcott's Germantown school did not come into competition with Mr. Junkin's seminary, — being made up of small children and commenced in his own house (the Rooker cottage) with five pupils, May 2, 1831. About the same time he began the education of his eldest daughter, Anna, who was born a few weeks earlier. At the end of June he had ten pupils between the ages of three and nine, and his school was a department of an older school conducted by his friend, William Russell. The plan was that Mr. Alcott should teach children up to nine years old, and should then pass them over to Mr. Russell, whose schoolroom was in a different building; they hoped to increase the school to thirty or forty pupils, — day scholars and boarders, — and upon these to illustrate their principles of education. Mr. Alcott's main purpose, he says, "is to form the character, mental and moral, of the pupils;" and he thus describes the occupations of the children: —

“They arrive at the school at eight o’clock in the morning, have an hour’s play in the yard, and enjoy a pleasant social intercourse until nine o’clock, when their exercises in the schoolroom commence. The relation of a story by the teacher, involving an illustration of some virtue, and designed to excite virtuous feelings in their bosoms, usually begins their exercises. Both teacher and children remark upon the story, and illustrate the principles involved in it, by events or feelings drawn from their own reading or experience. This exercise usually occupies an hour, when the children commence writing on their slates, or in books prepared for the purpose, simple exercises in spelling, reading, definition, expression, drawing, etc. All are competent to write in the common Roman letters. In a variety of exercises on their slates and in their books they pass the day, — three hours in the morning, and two hours in the afternoon. Nothing is presented them without first making it interesting to them, and thus securing their voluntary attention. They are made happy by taking an interest in their own progress and pursuits. I have made some progress in the composition of a work on Early Education, designed chiefly for the perusal and aid of mothers. Should it meet my views when completed, I may publish it.”

During this eventful period, in which her first child was born, the school was opened at German-town, and the education of his infant undertaken by the father at an age when instruction seldom

begins in this direct manner, Mrs. Alcott's pen was not idle. Writing from Philadelphia (Feb. 3, 1831) to Colonel May, she says:—

“ We have been engaged for the last few days in making preparations for Germantown. A very good house not far from Friend Haines and near the Academy is now vacant, which we can hire for a reasonable sum; and as a few weeks will elapse before the institution commences operations, our friends have thought it best for us to secure the situation. Mr. Alcott has had many reasons for vacillating about his decision between city and country; but the former cannot even be tried without great pecuniary resources, and the latter is secure, though less advantageous ultimately. Mr. Haines has been indefatigable in making everything sure, without binding us to any engagement which we may see cause to regret. Mr. Jenks and Mr. Cole are principals of the male department of the Academy; Mr. Russell and Mr. Alcott of the female and elementary departments. Our prospects are pleasant and encouraging; we have found many very important friends, and, though in Germantown, we shall not be cut off from their generous and intelligent society. We enjoy the simple habits and manners of the people here very much. You would be delighted with the cheerful and natural behavior of the most wealthy and aristocratic part of society. The Friends are the majority, and this, I suppose, gives a dignified, tranquil, and simple air to the whole.”

Under date of May 7, she again wrote to her father, to whom she had previously announced the birth of her daughter:—

“I am glad if the sentiments in my last letter gratified you. They were the natural expression of the full and grateful heart of a mother. My little girl is now seven weeks old; neither she nor myself have known sickness since her presence made my heart glad. She is blessed with her father’s mild and gentle spirit, and gives me no anxiety nor trouble. Mr. Alcott has kept a record of her physical and intellectual progress which is truly interesting. It seems as if she were conscious of his observations, and were desirous of furnishing him daily with an item for his record. Our arrangements have been completed at last, after some vacillation from several circumstances. But Mr. Haines has now bought a fine house for our department of the school. It is situated on the main street, the grounds and garden standing back and including an acre or more, all beautifully laid out. Our garden is planted, our house painted, inside and out, and neatly furnished, and we are making arrangements for our children as boarders.”

When she had been a year married, Mrs. Alcott wrote thus to her brother in Connecticut:—

“This is the anniversary of my wedding-day, and I now devote an hour to you in living over the past and projecting the future. It has been an eventful year, —

a year of trial, of happiness, of improvement. I can wish no better fate to any sister of the sex than has attended me since my entrance into the conjugal state. Our prospects are good. I wish you could see our delightful situation. You would not wonder that we went to our last dollar to establish ourselves in this little paradise. Imagination never pictured out to me a residence so perfectly to my mind. I wish my friends could see how delightfully I am settled. My father has never married a daughter or seen a son more completely happy than I am. I have cares, and soon they will be arduous ones ; but with the mild, constant, and affectionate sympathy and aid of my husband, with the increasing health and loveliness of my quiet and bright little Anna, with the co-operation and efficient care of my nurse and housekeeper, a house whose neatness and order would cope with Federal Court, a garden lined with raspberries, currants, gooseberry bushes, a large ground with a beautiful serpentine walk shaded with pines, firs, cedars, apple, pear, peach, and plum trees, a long cedar hedge from the back to the front fence, with good health, clear head, grateful heart, and ready hand, — what can I not do when surrounded by influences like these? What can I leave undone with so many aids?

“ Mr. Haines presented us with busts of Newton and Locke, and our rooms are convenient and fitted up tastefully. A fine Venetian window looks down the yard at one end, and two windows at the other end look into the main street. I have thus entered into de-

tails that you might have some notion of the premises, and imagine us in our new home."

Under date of June 8, Mr. Alcott writes in his diary at Germantown:¹ "On the whole, I enjoy life here; my health is improving, my prospects are good. The babe is making rapid progress, and Mrs. Alcott is in fine health. The journal of the infant's progress continues to become more and more interesting." Two days later, Mrs. Alcott sent to Colonel May by her brother-in-law, Mr. Greele, who was visiting them, Mr. Watson's "Annals of Philadelphia," once a famous work, and wrote to him thus: —

"There seems to be no time, when friends are present but for a few hours, to prepare letters for those who are absent; and I must only leave them to thank you again for your last kind letter, and beg your acceptance of a book which, with a duplicate, the author presented us. His daughter is a pupil of Mr. Alcott's. He is a neighbor of ours. At his house I sat in William Penn's chair, which was presented him by his descendants, and which was sent to Harrisburg for La Fayette to see and sit in. Mr. Watson is the author of the book, 'The Annals of Philadelphia.' He is the chronicler

¹ The Alcotts went to Germantown Feb. 18, 1831; Reuben Haines died the following October; the school, which flourished for a while, dwindled; and in March, 1833, Mr. Alcott opened a school in Philadelphia.

and oracle of this part of the country. The table of contents will furnish you with selections which I think you will find very amusing and entertaining for occasional reading. I am sorry to say so little when my heart is overflowing with much, but my duties require my presence. I send you a view of the Wissahiccon, a beautiful romantic stream about a mile from us. It is now fringed on either side by the high laurel [rhododendron] and is a fine object to the eye of a painter."

In his diary for August 6, Mr. Alcott says: "Rode with my pupils to the Wissahiccon, and passed the day amid its delightfully romantic scenery. The effect of this excursion will have a happy influence upon their imaginations and feelings. The young mind needs more communion with Nature than our modern system of influence gives it." It was now vacation, and Mr. Alcott was "engaged in recreation, writing, and some reading." His reading, during this residence in and near Philadelphia, was indeed immense; the libraries, public and private, were open to him, and he read at this time, among other authors, more or less of Aristotle, Plato, Bacon, Sir James Mackintosh, Brougham, Carlyle, Cogan, Bulwer's novels, Shelley's poetry, Sismondi, De Gerando, George Combe, and innumerable works on education, morals, and religion. But nothing absorbed him more than

the study of human nature in his own infant daughter. Under date of July 31, 1831, he writes:—

“I am much interested in the progress of my little girl, now five months old, which I have recorded from the day of her birth. This record has swollen to a hundred pages. I have attempted to discover, so far as this could be done by external indication, the successive steps of her physical, mental, and moral advancement. The result has been to collect a much greater number of what seem to me to be facts than I at first imagined possible.”

Mr. Alcott's second daughter, Louisa, the celebrated author, was born at Germantown on her father's birthday, Nov. 29, 1832.¹ At this time and for some months afterwards, her father was seriously considering whether he should not give up his Germantown school, and remove either to Philadelphia or to Boston, — for he was already looking towards Boston as the best place for carrying on that wider scheme of education which had slowly developed in his own mind during his ten years' experience as a schoolmaster for little children. His alternation of success and failure in this career had taught him what the future had in

¹ Mr. Alcott's friend, Ellery Channing, the poet, was also born on this day of the month, — Nov. 29, 1818, in Boston.

store; and he did not look forward to much immediate success or influence with the generation then occupying the stage. In his diary for 1833 he thus writes: —

“The nature of the experiment in which I am to engage, removed from popular appreciation, is in itself a bar to success. There are few who duly appreciate the ends or understand the means by which the advancement of humanity is to be attained. The few are in the darkness of twilight regarding the whole matter, and the mass of mankind wholly in the dark; often so fraught with prejudice and false opinion — with zeal without knowledge, or knowledge without zeal — that a generous plan for the improvement of men would excite opposition, and the worst form of sectarian jealousy. The fear of innovation — the idea of crumbling away the old foundation of opinion or practice — weighs down whatever promises well to mankind. Boston seems adapted to my purposes better than any other city. Purer views of man prevail there, society is riper, intellectual and moral wealth are more equally diffused, and the experiments made there on man and opinion have prepared the way for those I have in view. There, too, is a more intelligent sympathy for the improvement of humanity, freer toleration of variant opinions, and a more generous philanthropy than can be found elsewhere.”

Nevertheless, he did not return to Boston in 1833, but established a small school in Philadel-

phia, which he opened, with fifteen pupils, April 22, 1833. This experiment had the same result as the former one; and when the summer vacation came, the Alcotts returned to Boston, and found such encouragement there, from Dr. Channing and other friends, that they did not go back to Philadelphia. Mr. Alcott first met Dr. Channing, in familiar intercourse, at Philadelphia, where the great divine passed some months in the spring of 1833 for the benefit of his always feeble health. In his diary for April, 1833, Mr. Alcott writes:—

“ I have seen Dr. Channing several times. Our conversations have chiefly turned on intellectual subjects, — Coleridge’s character and writings, Sir James Mackintosh, Bentham, Early Education, Slavery, etc. His views are marked by a deep philanthropic spirit and a philosophic tendency. No man, with the exception of Mr. Russell, gives me greater pleasure in conversation, or offers more cordial sympathy. On most topics connected with the nature, duties, and destiny of man, our opinions are analogous. They are the fruits of the same school of philosophy, a union of the Christian with the Platonic.¹ He is, I conceive, the greatest man of this age. His mind is more purely philosophic

¹ In his multifarious readings at Philadelphia, Mr. Alcott had studied Plato as well as Coleridge, and had discovered the general Platonic cast of his own mind. It was left for a later day to ascertain how much Aristotle had influenced him.

than that of any other American divine; his speculations more profound and generous. His views are universal; they embody the infinite and spiritual. His heart has sympathized more deeply with his race than often happens to the philosophic genius, and the fruits of that genius will form a part of literature to remain in the treasury of America, long after he shall have departed. Another age will understand and adopt his views. His name will be connected with the improvers of his race, the discoverers in ethics and psychology. When in Boston, he was one of my most judicious friends, interpreting my views to others as I wished, doing justice to me and to them."

To this eminently just portraiture of Dr. Channing, let me add as the colophon to this chapter of varied experiences in Boston and Philadelphia, a passage from the diary written a year later,—April, 1834:—

"My early acquaintance with Mrs. Alcott in Connecticut was in days of joyous expectation and tranquil hope. The ideal after which I have ever since been striving was then imaged in bright and not indefinite colors. The picture has not faded, only its tints have changed, — the greenness of spring has ripened into the soberer hue of summer. Strange infatuation of those who behold not in outward circumstances the transcript of their own folly and dereliction from nature! who know not that, by the mastery of circumstances, truth and wisdom are to be wrought out of the human heart.

We are alone fulfilling the true ends of our being when we strive to realize in things around us the ideal of our own spirits. All we can conceive should be sought after; the visions of our youth are the prolusions of our age, which not to fulfil is not to do our duty, is to prove our weakness; for it testifies the power of the present and visible over the future and invisible. Our youthful hopes are prophecies of a heavenly origin. They are the dim outlinings of our destiny. Like the lights, faint and varied in the east, ere the sun appears, they foretell our approach to the horizon of life, and mark our direction through the sky.¹ Happy they who ascend steadily their upward course, and shed light, heat, and life to those below! Happy they who, at setting, have fulfilled their high behest, and ripened the field upon which they have shone!"

¹ Emerson wrote thus in 1838: "Alcott is a ray of the oldest light. They say the light of some stars that parted from the orb at the deluge of Noah has only now reached our earth."

CHAPTER V.

THE RECORD OF A BOSTON SCHOOL.

UP to the date we have now reached, Bronson Alcott was unknown to the public, and the circle of his acquaintance was hardly a wide one. As peddler, schoolmaster, and student of philosophy, he had not been so placed as to attract public attention, except in a few localities and in a limited way. At Philadelphia he had engaged with his friend William Russell in an enterprise to enlist public co-operation in their advanced thought concerning education; and an association was there formed, in 1831, which promoted lectures and established a journal¹ (whose publication began Jan. 1, 1832, and closed March 15, the same year) which was to promulgate these ad-

¹ This was "The Journal of Instruction, conducted by the Philadelphia Association of Teachers. Published monthly by H. H. Porter, Philadelphia. (1833.) Editors, William Russell, A. Bronson Alcott, Prof. Walter R. Johnson, John M. Keagy, Rev. M. M. Carll, John Frost, Silas C. Walker."

vanced opinions. But the publisher of the journal failed in a few months, and the undertaking came to naught. Mr. Alcott, like Mr. Russell and Dr. Alcott, contributed to the New England journals of education; and he occasionally lectured to audiences, larger or smaller, on some branch of his main subject,—the development, by instruction and conversation, of the youthful mind. But by the autumn of 1834 his long period of apprenticeship was over, and he began, with the opening of his famous school at the Masonic Temple in Boston, to be a conspicuous person in a city not averse to displaying its actors with every circumstance of publicity. Boston was then, as since, fond of self-contemplation and self-approbation; it thought highly of itself, and of those whom it distinguished with its favor. Bronson Alcott, under the commendation of Dr. Channing and other friends, then of great influence, became for a while a Boston favorite, with all that position implied. He was a schoolmaster, but so had Milton been; and Milton was still the most renowned poet for the Bostonians, — partly because it had just been discovered that he was a Unitarian. Dr. Channing reviewed him in that capacity, and the youthful Emerson wrote one of his shining essays to characterize the Puritan poet. Bronson Alcott was, indeed, not unlike Milton in

his lofty self-appreciation, of which Dr. Johnson says:—

“The applause of the Florentine academies appears to have exalted Milton in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope that ‘by labor and intense study, which,’ says he, ‘I take to be my portion in this life,’ joined with a strong propensity of nature, he might ‘leave something so written to after-times as they should not willingly let it die.’ He had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much and praised so few. . . . Upon his return from Italy, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate Street, . . . where he received boys to be boarded and instructed.”

Dr. Johnson, who had himself been a school-master (the old Laird of Auchinleck, Boswell’s father, said, “He keepit a schule, an’ ca’d it an acawdemy”), here turns aside to scoff a little, saying what may also be applied in some sort to Alcott:—

“Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance; on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action, vapors away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem

to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a schoolmaster; but since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue, and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. . . . From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge; its only genuine product, I believe, is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin, by his nephew Philips, of which, perhaps, none of my readers has ever heard."

Those who have been inclined to scoff at Mr. Alcott, as Johnson scoffs at Milton, cannot deny, however, that the "genuine product" of the Temple School was not one small book alone, but two considerable ones,—the "Record of a School," edited by Miss Elizabeth Peabody, first published in 1835, and republished in 1874; and the "Conversations with Children on the Gospels," edited by Mr. Alcott himself, in two volumes, one appearing in 1836, the other in 1837,—which caused such commotion in Boston that it led eventually to the downfall of the Temple School. This chapter in Mr. Alcott's life is so typical and important that much space must be given to it. It was the introduction to his long

career as a public agitator and reformer, and is closely connected with his earlier and later interest in the abolition of slavery, and the outburst of what is called Transcendentalism in New England. For in 1837 it was true, as Mr. Frothingham has said,¹ that Mr. Alcott, not his friend Emerson, was the reputed leader of the Boston Transcendentalists, "none being more active than he in diffusing the ideas of the Spiritual Philosophy, and none so uncompromising in his interpretations of them."

Miss Elizabeth Peabody, who appears as the recorder of the Temple School, and who is now almost the only surviving friend of Dr. Channing and Mr. Alcott in that special period of their relation to each other, had for several years before 1834 been very intimate with the great Unitarian preacher; had acted, too, as his amanuensis, and also as a kind of intermediary between the recluse clergyman and the younger Bostonians, whose tendencies and opinions he was directing. She was also an early friend of Emerson, and was

¹ Transcendentalism in New England, by O. B. Frothingham, pp. 257-258 (New York, 1876). This volume contains a careful and serious estimate of Bronson Alcott as a Transcendentalist, with some observations on his educational theories. It does not include, however, that later development of Alcott's philosophy which appeared in the discussions of the Concord School, from 1879 to 1882.

herself deeply interested in all the problems of education. She became a teacher in Mr. Alcott's Temple School, and at one time resided in his family. Her book must be taken with a certain allowance for the strong bias which she had towards her own view of a subject, and a certain warmth of imagination that sometimes affected the colder regions of exact recollection. Among the admirable portraits drawn by Alcott in his old age, and published in his book of Sonnets, few are better than that intended for Miss Peabody:—

“ Daughter of Memory ! who her watch doth keep
O'er dark Oblivion's land of shade and dream,
Peers down into the realm of ancient Sleep,
Where Thought uprises with a sudden gleam
And lights the devious path 'twixt Be and Seem ;
Mythologist ! that doth thy legend steep
Plenteously with opiate and anodyne,
Inweaving fact with fable, line with line,
Entangling anecdote and episode,
Mindful of all that all men meant or said, —
We follow, pleased, thy labyrinthine road,
By Ariadne's skein and lesson led :
For thou hast wrought so excellently well,
Thou drop'st more casual truth than sages tell.”¹

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Mr. Alcott in his diary (Sept. 22, 1834) gives this account of the beginning at the Masonic Tem-

¹ Sonnets and Canzonets by A. Bronson Alcott, p. 103 (Boston : Roberts Brothers, 1882). Just preceding this is a Sonnet on Dr. Channing, also descriptive of his chief gifts.

ple, in Tremont Street,— then one of the finest buildings in Boston architecturally, and of spacious dimensions for the amplitude of his school:

“ I opened school to-day with thirty children (between three and twelve), and am assisted in their instruction by Miss Peabody, whose reputation, both as regards original and acquired ability, is high, — she unites intellectual and practical qualities of no common order. Her proposition to aid me comes from the deep interest she feels in human culture, and her friendly desire to establish me in this city. I have obtained very fine rooms in the Temple, and have made arrangements to fit up the interior in a style corresponding to the exterior, and, what is of more importance, in adaptation to those who are to assemble there for the formation of tastes and habits. I have spared no expense to surround the senses with appropriate emblems of intellectual and spiritual life. Paintings, busts, books, and not inelegant furniture have been deemed important. I wish to fill every form that addresses the senses with significance and life, so that whatever is seen, said, or done shall picture ideal beauty and perfection; thus placing the child in a scene of tranquil repose and spiritual loveliness. I would bring external circumstances into harmony with that serenity of spirit and vivacity of portraiture which are the native attributes of unspoiled childhood, — planting, as it were, a prop around which its tendrils may fasten, and thus lift its aspiring energies to the skies.

“My pupils seem favored by nature with good capacities. I am glad to find them so free from the usual entailment of school habits. They seem to have been well taught, having few vicious tendencies either of spirit or body. About half are girls, — a circumstance most favorable to the exertion of a pure moral influence on the formation of character, and preserving the social relations unbroken during the impressible period of life. By the present arrangement, I shall never be occupied with practical instruction more than five hours daily, and ultimately, perhaps, not more than three. I shall be able also to do better justice to my family than I have done. Thirty pupils (there will doubtless be more) will bring me an income of \$1,800, — sufficient to support us comfortably, and soon free me from debt. The sensation of thrift is to me a delightful one, and the more so from the continuous scuffling with untoward circumstances to which I have been subjected. This income may at least take from the toils of life some anxieties and some impediments to progress in the celestial life, and may serve to open out powers which have struggled amid severer conditions.”

After dwelling for a while on this pleasing prospect of material comfort, Alcott addresses the great god Mammon, whose worship was and is so incessant in New England; and thus he writes in his private diary: —

“Thou art indeed the visible Deity; thou art the Known and Undoubted, — for where thou art is Reality

and Trust. No one doubts thee ; thou art loved and worshipped ; thou hast no enemy ; all mankind are thy friends. He who should speak, perchance, disparagingly of thy virtues, or deny thy name, would lose all credence with the world. An outcast and an infidel would he be, — the pity, the scorn of thy faithful devotees. Thou art indeed Mammon, and he that serves and loves thee in faith can love and serve none else ; for thou servest him so faithfully that he cannot desert thee if he would. . . . But the celestial temple is to be entered, not in selfish acquisitiveness, but in love : its sacred images are not to be bartered in the market-place, nor sold in the shops ; for they are of the temple alone. Into this building no self-seeking spirit may enter with impunity. The whip of small cords is ever plying within, — even the irritating thong of conscience, perpetually ringing in the ear, ‘ This is the house of prayer, and of it ye are not to make a den of thieves.’ ”

Entering upon his missionary work in Boston with this spirit, in the year 1834, we may well foresee that the young Transcendentalist — he had reached “the midway of this our mortal life,” as Dante says, but he was still as young as most men at twenty-five — would hardly succeed, either materially or spiritually, in converting the idolatrous town. A hand less gentle must wield the whip of small cords which ten years later passed into the manly grasp of Theodore Parker. But for a while the school

prospered, and all went well. October 11 he writes:—

“I now have thirty-four pupils, of whom eight are girls, and most are under ten years. They make a happy, interesting group; they begin to feel a deep interest in my teaching, and to appreciate the purposes I have in view. They are a fine assemblage of children. There are few or no positive vices to eradicate; frivolity, carelessness, inactivity of thought, and ill-directed desire are the main qualities to which my attention is to be turned. As to direct intellectual action, little can be expected immediately. I shall first remove obstructions to the growth of the mind: these lie in the appetites, passions, desires, and will. Intellectual results will follow the discipline of the sentiments; for in these lie the guiding energies of the whole being. He who reaches the will and subdues the desires, brings the child under his control, and has commenced the work of human culture on a basis that will sustain and continue. The heart is the seat of action,—material, organic, intellectual, moral,—influence this, and the whole being feels the touch. To ‘keep this with all diligence’ is the purpose of education, ‘for out of it are the issues of life.’ ‘Obey and know’ is the only maxim that leads to excellence. Faith imparts energy, growth, reproductiveness, to every germ of man’s nature.”

Teaching in this high mood, Alcott found favor with all who were of the same household of faith. He was still outwardly a Unitarian; some of his

kindred in Boston were leading members of Dr. Channing's church; others of the King's Chapel society, where Colonel May for many years had been one of the wardens. The active, genial spirit of Mrs. Alcott and her brother, S. J. May, also did much to promote the interests of the new school, and it went on "from grace to glory," in the Bostonian sense of those terms. Pupils increased, visitors thronged the beautiful schoolroom, Miss Peabody was delighted and enthusiastic, and the first year passed away without censure or blame. But the internal difficulties of keeping instruction upon the high plane indicated in the passages quoted were from the first quite serious. Under date of Oct. 23, 1834, we find this:—

"In the discharge of my duties as a teacher I have found very few works to aid me; I have been thrown mostly upon my own resources, and have created, from circumstances and the ideal of my own mind, the material for intellectual and spiritual nurture. Very few works have become established favorites with children, — works containing thoughts to which they recur with delight, and which waken, as it were, a brood of others in their minds, and affect their habits both of feeling and of action. I mention, as occurring to me at this time, the following: The Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, Krummacher's Parables, The Story without an End, Spenser's Fairy Queen, Quarles's Emblems, and Emblems Moral and Divine (Alciat?). To form a large

library suitable to the wants of the young, from works among us, would be impossible. We have none, absolutely none, that nurture the spiritual life; for the moral nature we have little. A dozen volumes would include all that is adequate to quicken and sustain the purest wants of the soul. On subjects of mere fancy or of the understanding, we have many works; but they serve mostly to dissipate the thoughts of the young, and materialize their spirits. I have been seeking works fit for my purpose during the last ten years, and have found but few,—my library is still scanty; and yet in this period hundreds of volumes have been added to our juvenile literature on almost every subject. In our indiscriminate zeal or blind indifference, we have either pampered or starved the young in this respect.

“I have sent to England for copies of *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Fairy Queen*; since fine copies of neither could be found in Boston at the common bookstores or the antiquarian shops, of which there are two. Except in my own school, I know of no provision for the culture of the imagination by specific tuition anywhere in our country; I seldom hear any one speak of the importance of cultivating it. And yet, if any fact be settled by history, it is that imagination has been the guiding impulse of society. For what is genius but this faculty in vivid action? and genius has shaped the common mind, and institutions in all ages. We need schools, not for the inculcation of knowledge, merely, but for the development of genius; this is the peculiar

attribute of the soul, — it is the soul, indeed, in full and harmonious play. And no instruction deserves the name that does not call forth this essential life of the soul, and fit it for manifestation in literature, art, or philosophy. . . .

“ At my school the spiritual fire begins to warm some of the drowsy, cold natures into life and movement; but I have yet much to do. I have succeeded in interesting all, have reached the understandings of all, and am feeling my way to their hearts. I am vivifying the imagination; the affections will come along with this. Some of the older ones require great changes to be made, before the understanding, the heart, or the mind can act with freedom and accuracy. Here are young beings who have lived ten or twelve years, and have not yet learned the first conditions of spiritual progress, — whose views of obedience and application are all adverse to improvement. They are sunk in the senses, and the currents of the will are set against the heart and the spirit. Much less needs to be done for the younger pupils than for these. Discipline! discipline! discipline moral and intellectual. The younger pupils are still docile; a rigidity, a frowardness, has not yet been superinduced; such are still the yielding subjects of discipline. There must have been great neglect somewhere. A depraved child! never was there one such when parental and social influences were duly bestowed upon it. But of human culture we know as yet very little, — little of the being whom it is our office to cultivate; and the sad story of our ignorance is told,

and constantly repeated, in the early perversity of man's noble powers. We do not stop to listen, — we have become so accustomed to the tale that we deem this a necessary appendage to our life."

Amid these difficulties, which this gentle scribe always understates, the ornamentation and reporting of the school went on. In the diary for January, 1835, I find these passages:—

"In addition to the statuary and painting at the schoolroom, I added to-day a fine cast of Silence, from some Italian model. It was executed by the Italian in School Street, and is, I conceive, quite an acquisition to the school. It will aid me in the work of discipline. I will here enumerate the casts, busts, and pictures placed in my schoolroom: Head of Jesus, in basso relievo; bust of Plato; bust of Socrates, on pedestal; bust of Shakespeare, on pedestal; bust of Milton, on pedestal; picture of Dr. Channing, by Harding; picture of travellers; picture of a rural scene; picture of the Flight into Egypt, by Guido (an engraving); picture of the Temple (an engraving); casts of the Sciences, by Canova; cast of Silence. Besides these works of art, often called into use as illustrations of subjects of instruction, and tending to impress the sense of reality upon the mind of the pupil, the schoolroom is fitted up with tasteful furniture, desks, chairs, books, tablets (paper and wooden), cubes, cards, clock, with an alarm for the hours of study, hour-glass, dissected letters, mirror, boxes, vases, etc., the whole diffus-

ing unconsciously an influence favorable to tranquillity, thought, and study. The effect of the external arrangements is so much aid in the work of discipline, intellectual and moral. Happiness, application, are the most natural results of these influences. The mind is predisposed to repose and serenity; and the instruction, harmonizing with the external influences, renders the school a delightful place in their associations.¹

“Miss Peabody is now present every day, and keeps a journal of the operations and spirit of the instruction. It bids fair to prove a faithful transcript of what passes in the schoolroom. This journal is to be published, not only as a prospectus of my present school, but as an offering to the community of the fruits of my mind in a most important relation; for I do not wish to come forward with an elaborate work on the philosophy and practice of education. The time has not yet come.

¹ In 1838 Emerson wrote in his journal, after talking with his friend: “Alcott declares that a teacher is one who can assist the child in obeying his own mind, and who can remove all unfavorable circumstances. He believes that from a circle of twenty well-selected children he could draw in their conversation everything that is in Plato, and as much better in form than it is in Plato as the passages I read him in the *Heimskringla* are than Bancroft. He measures ages by leaders, and reckons history by Pythagoras, Plato, Jesus, and Pestalozzi. *In his own school in Boston, when he had made the schoolroom beautiful, he looked on the work as half done.* He said that every great man of antiquity had an eminent philosopher as his teacher; and this is true for Pericles, Alexander, Alcibiades.”

Principles and methods, what is theoretic and what is practical, should be united at present in whatever is thrown out to the inquisitive public. A simple record of practice in the schoolroom, with just enough explanation to make it intelligible, to impart the spirit of the theory, will be more effective in impressing my views than a more elaborate work. I shall venture the volume in the spring, by way of trial." (The date of this particular entry is Jan. 6, 1835.)

Miss Peabody's volume, which she edited as well as wrote, was finished in June, 1835, and appeared about the middle of July, not very well printed, but full of interesting and novel Socratic and Platonic matter. Writing July 19, Mr. Alcott says in his diary: "The 'Record of a School' is now before the reading community. Its acceptance is problematical. It embodies some of my mind and practice, and presents a glimpse of my purposes. I know of no one who could have represented me more justly than Miss Peabody." His friend, William Russell, still in Philadelphia, received the volume with enthusiasm, saying, in a letter (August 23): —

"We make use of it at home as a sort of juvenile family Bible. I am truly glad that such a work is come out. I do not know how much good it may do, but it is the most eloquent testimony for humanity that I have heard."

Commenting upon this letter, Mr. Alcott says, still looking forward towards the unattained and, alas for him! the unattainable:—

“The volume that is to follow it, ‘Conversations on the Life of Christ,’ will, I think, do not a little to turn the hearts of adults to the children, who have heretofore received so little justice from their hands. Of this volume I have an assurance, from my inmost heart, that it will revive in the minds of this age the spirit of unsophisticated Christianity, and unfold the kingdom of Heaven as it is in the heart of childhood. Not wholly shall I leave my mission unfulfilled, if I do nothing more than give this volume to the pure and sensible-minded of my time.”¹

Under date of September 9, the diary says: “The ‘Record’ has been favorably received, and bids fair to do its work of usefulness to parents and teachers. Several notices of it have appeared recently in the periodicals, all favorable to it, and a review is promised in the forthcoming number of the ‘Christian Examiner’ and in the ‘North American.’ More than half the edition is already disposed of, and the demand is greater than ever at present. — *October 3.* There was a fire a few evenings since, and some copies of the ‘Record’ were destroyed. A new and improved edition is

¹ This was the first volume of “Conversations on the Gospels,” published by James Monroe in 1836, about the time that he published Emerson’s first volume, “Nature.”

thought of, for it is in demand, and is generally much liked." But the voices were not all favorable to the new book, and in the "Annals of Education" for October there appeared a notice which foreshadowed the risk impending over the innovating Socrates of Tremont Street. This journal, at that time important, made these observations editorially:—

"We must say that while we rejoice to see a 'Record of a School' from any quarter,—while we wish to see many, and hope to see some called forth to meet the errors of this one,—we regard it as a mingled mass of truth and error, of useful and useless and injurious principles and methods. It will be interesting to every thinking teacher, but dangerous to the unthinking. We esteem the author highly, and hope reflection and experience will lead him to correct his views."

Even Miss Peabody, the author of the volume, while not finding fault with anything it contained, was also beginning to shrink a little from the consequences of the radical change in education which Mr. Alcott contemplated. Upon resuming her work as Latin teacher in the Temple School, October 8, 1835, she wrote to him as follows:—

"I will now make a remark or two of a more general character, upon your views and practice, which I do not agree with. This I do merely that you may understand me, and not because I have the least expectation

or intention of influencing you. . . . I think you are liable to injure the modesty and unconsciousness of good children by making them reflect too much upon their actual superiority to others. For though they may theoretically believe that there is no difference between individuals, this is not enough to balance the effect of a constant reference to their actual superiority. I think the injury would be the greatest, not with the most ideal, but with the most sentimental. A collateral disadvantage, however, to both classes is that of being talked about by the whole city, which is a great misfortune, though of an external nature. The other point of difference, in your views and practice, from what mine would be, as it goes deeper into the philosophy of things, I have not been in a hurry to suggest. I wanted to see if you did not change my opinions, and have expected that you would. But a year's observation of your practice has not convinced me, and my own opinion and feeling have only grown more strong.

“I do not think that Evil should be clothed in *forms* by the imagination. I think every effort should be made to strip it of all individuality, all shaping, and all coloring. And the reason is, that Evil has in truth no substantial existence, that it acquires all the existence it has from want of faith and of soul-cultivation, and that this is sufficient reason why all cultivation should be directed to give positiveness, coloring, shaping, etc., to all kinds of good, — Good alone being eternal truth. If you ask me what I do with Spencer and Bunyan, I say that I forgive them in consideration of their genius,

which compensates us with so much beauty; and I would have Spencer, Bunyan, etc. read, not for those things, but in spite of them. I have no forgiveness to bestow on such a direful abortion of the imagination as the *Spiritual Mirror*.¹ I might specify further, and argue further; but my only object is to tell you where I differ from you, not to make good my difference, as I do not suppose you will ever change your mind through the influence of another."

This last remark points to a certain inflexibility in Mr. Alcott's views, which we shall often have occasion to notice in his after life. But he received all criticism courteously; and in this case he wrote in his diary:—

"Evil has no positive existence, I agree with Miss Peabody, but it has usurped a positive place and being in the popular imagination, and by the imagination must it be made to flee away into its negative life. How shall this be done? By shadowing forth in vivid colors the absolute beauty and phenomena of good, by assuming evil not as positive but as negative, the dark ground and blot in the picture by contrast. We have

¹ Miss Peabody was quite right in objecting to this emblematic and semi-religious work of the last century, with its atrocious pictures of demonic evil and celestial good. Mr. Alcott had found it a few weeks before in a bookstore, translated from the French: "*The Spiritual Mirror or Looking-Glass; Exhibiting the Human Heart as Being either the Temple of God, or Habitation of Devils.*"

the notion of evil in lieu of the idea of good; and where the one has predominance we must refer to the other as its measure, its contrast, as the natural method of the mind is in the act of apprehension. The error lies in dwelling upon it so as to make it positive, and not a contrast."

This speculative opinion of the two Transcendentalists agrees almost exactly with Saint Augustine's argument, in that remarkable statement of the "Confessions" where he denies the positive existence of evil, and proves his point by a syllogism.¹ But in points of doctrine Mr. Alcott was already wandering far from the followers of Augustine, the New England Calvinists, and even from the Unitarians, with whom he was still nominally associated. It was this variation from received tradition which really wrecked the Temple School, in the opinion of Boston; its

¹ The words of Augustine (Confessions, lib. vii., chap. 12) are these: "Ergo quæcumque sunt, bona sunt. Malumque illud, quod quærebam unde esset, non est substantia; quia si substantia esset, bonum esset. Aut enim esset incorruptibilis substantia magnum utique bonum, aut substantia corruptibilis esset, quæ nisi bona esset, corrumpi non posset. Itaque vidi, et manifestatum est mihi quia omnia bona Tu fecisti, et prorsus nullæ substantiæ sunt, quas Tu non fecisti, et quoniam non æqualia omnia fecisti, ideo sunt omnia, quia singula bona sunt, et simul omnia valde bona, quoniam fecit Deus noster omnia bona valde."—C. 13: "Et Tibi omnino non est malum, quia extra non est aliquid, quod irrumpat et corrumpat ordinem, quod posuisti."

success and its failure may be traced to the same source.

In Miss Peabody's volume, which may easily be consulted in the reprint edited by Mr. Alcott himself in 1874,¹ she describes her first experience at his Temple School, in a passage which exhibits very well the ingenious and Socratic method adopted by its teacher:—

“About twenty children came the first day. They were all under ten years of age, excepting two or three girls. I became his assistant, to teach Latin to such as might desire to learn. Mr. Alcott sat behind his desk, and the children were placed in chairs in a large arc around him; the chairs so far apart that they could not easily touch each other. He then asked each one separately what idea he or she had of the purpose of coming to school. ‘To learn,’ was the first answer. ‘To learn what?’ By pursuing this question, all the common exercises of the school were brought up by the children themselves, and various subjects of arts, science, philosophy. Still Mr. Alcott intimated that this was not all; and at last some one said, ‘To behave well;’ and in pursuing this expression into its mean-

¹ Record of Mr. Alcott's School. Third Edition, Revised. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874. Pp. 297. The earliest edition had this title; “Record of a School, Exemplifying the General Principles of Spiritual Culture. He that receiveth a little child in my name, receiveth me, *Jesus Christ*. Boston: Published by James Munroe and Company, 1835.”

ings, they at last agreed that they came to learn to feel rightly, to think rightly, and to act rightly. A boy of seven years old suggested that the most important of these three was right action. . . . School discipline was very carefully considered,—both Mr. Alcott's duties and the children's duties, also various means of producing attention, self-control, perseverance, faithfulness. Among these means correction was mentioned; and after a consideration of its nature and issues, they all agreed that it was necessary, and that they preferred Mr. Alcott should correct them rather than leave them in their faults, and that it was his duty to do so. Various punishments were mentioned, and hurting the body was admitted to be necessary and desirable whenever words were found insufficient to command the memory of conscience.

“After this conversation, which involved many anecdotes, many supposed cases, and many judgments, Mr. Alcott read ‘The Peaches’ from Krummacher’s Parables, a story which involves the free action of three boys of different characters, and questioned them respecting their opinion of these boys, and the principles on which it was seen by analysis that they acted. Nearly three hours passed away in this conversation and reading, and then they were asked how long they had been sitting; none of them thought more than an hour. After recess Mr. Alcott heard them read, and after that spell. All could read in such a book as Miss Edgeworth’s ‘Frank.’ Each was then asked what he had learned, and, having told, they were dismissed one

by one. The whole effect of the day seemed to be a combination of quieting influences, with an awakening effect upon the heart and mind.

“The next day a conversation somewhat like the former was commenced, and Mr. Alcott showed that he meant to have profound attention. When any one’s eyes wandered, he waited to have them return to him, and he required that they should sit very still in their comfortable chairs. The questions, by interesting them very much, aided them in this effort. After recalling conclusions of the day before, more fables were read. These he paraphrased, interrupting himself continually to enforce what was read, by addressing it particularly to individuals, requiring them now to guess what was coming next, and now to tell what they thought of things said and done. . . . It was soon found that Mr. Alcott, with all his mildness, was very strict. When sitting at their writing, he would not allow the least intercommunication, and every whisper was taken notice of. When they sat in a semicircle around him, they were not only requested to be silent, but to appear attentive; and any infringement of this rule would arrest his reading, and he would wait, however long, until attention was restored. There was some correction, but in every individual instance it was granted as necessary, not only by the whole school, but by the individual himself. Sometimes the innocent suffered with the guilty. Mr. Alcott wished both parties to feel that this was the inevitable consequence of moral evil in this world; and that the good, in proportion to the

depth of their principle, feel it to be worth while to share the sufferings, in order to bring the guilty to rectitude."

This doctrine, which Mr. Alcott even carried so far sometimes as to require the offending pupil to punish him, did not often require exemplification so surprising.¹ No doubt this doctrine connected itself in the teacher's mind with the lofty dogma of the Atonement, as it was long held by the Christian Church, and even by Alcott himself, although in its traditional form he had early questioned it. His habitual use of the Bible in the Temple School, and the peculiar lessons which he derived from this scripture and its analogues, will appear in Miss Peabody's volume:—

Feb. 9, 1835. "The word *bless* came up in the spelling lesson. It was defined as 'wishing well to others,' 'wishing God's blessing,' 'making happy.' Mr. Alcott asked if any one felt he comprehended all its meaning. No hands were raised, and a small boy

¹ John Brown of Osawatomie, Mr. Alcott's friend in after years, had also this method of dividing punishment between himself and his children. "Their father kept a record of their boyish sins, and on one occasion at least, when they amounted to twenty in number, he allowed one blow of the rod for each fault; but only half the blows were given to the boy, who then took the rod and punished his father with just as many blows."

said, 'Mr. Alcott, I do not believe you comprehend all its meaning yourself.' Mr. Alcott asked what blessings God gives. They answered severally, — food, sun, air, our souls, parents, etc. 'But there is one blessing greater than all you have mentioned.' They severally answered, after some consideration, 'Spirit, God's Spirit, the Bible.' 'The Bible,' said Mr. Alcott, 'is God in words. But the Bible is not the only Revelation of God. There are many Bibles, to those who think. Nature, the outward world, is a Bible. Its objects typify God's thoughts. The soul is a Bible.'

"'But what blessings have *you* had?' He addressed a boy who thinks little, but who catches the habit of answering. He replied, 'The Bible.' 'How is that a blessing?' said Mr. Alcott. 'The Lord blesses us with it,' said he. 'In what way?' 'He makes us happy.' 'With the Bible?' 'He makes us good.' 'Your answers do not sound as if they were your own reflections, but like parrotry. Tell me what blessings you have been blessed with to-day.' 'With a mind.' 'Are you thoughtless?' said I (referring to a confession or excuse he always makes when he has done wrong). 'Yes.' 'But does not thoughtless mean without thoughts?' 'Yes.' 'Can there be a mind without thoughts?' 'No.' 'Then how can you say that your mind is a blessing to you?' 'I have been baptized,' said he. 'How is that a blessing?' 'It purified me.' 'Are you pure, purified?' 'I was for a little while after I was baptized.' 'Was your soul or your body baptized?' 'My body.' 'Does not purity belong to

the mind?' 'Yes.' 'Do truth and love keep the mind pure? Do you understand what I mean when I say the soul is baptized with truth and love?' 'Yes.' 'Was your soul ever baptized so?' 'Yes.' 'How often?' 'Every day.' 'How long does it last?' 'A little while.' All these answers seemed given without thought; and Mr. Alcott pursued it still further, his object being to show this fancifully-worded boy that he had no self-knowledge, and that his ideas were not representations of his own thoughts and feelings, but mere verbal associations and meaningless images."

This searching dialectic evaporation of traditional and verbal associations, and the attempt to substitute real ideas concerning matters of faith, were carried farther in the subsequent volume of "Conversations on the Gospels." But even in Miss Peabody's volume they were sufficiently exhibited to give point in the minds of the Boston community to Emerson's later remark, "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker upon this planet; then things are at risk." It was at this very period that Alcott and Emerson became familiarly acquainted. In the diary for July 12, 1835, we find this entry, introducing us to a circle of persons who became more intimate afterward: —

"A few days since, Mrs. Morrison, of Philadelphia, came in town, bringing me letters from Mr. Russell. Last evening she saw several of our friends, — persons

with whom we wished her to be made acquainted. Among these were the following: Mr. Waldo Emerson, Charles Emerson, Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Child, Mr. S. J. May, Miss Elizabeth and Miss Mary Peabody (afterward Mrs. Horace Mann), Mrs. Bliss (afterward Mrs. George Bancroft), Miss Mary Emerson, Miss Elizabeth Hoar, and others."

There were two editions of the "Record of a School," in the second of which Miss Peabody undertook to give, by way of explanation, answers to some objections made to Mr. Alcott's methods and results,—among others some of her own objections. Concerning his teaching on points of Christian doctrine, she remarks:—

"So successful has he been in keeping free from the technology of sect, that one day when two ladies—one a Trinitarian, and the other a Humanitarian—were present at a lesson on the first chapter of John, each left the room, saying to Mr. Alcott, 'I perceive that my views are taught here.' . . . But it is said that Mr. Alcott teaches the Oriental doctrine of pre-existence and emanation. This is not the case; he indeed believes that birth is a spiritual act and fact prior to embodiment. And does not every one believe this, who does not think the soul of an individual the temperament of a body, the effect of matter? For my own part, I believe that this is the only way of conceiving the unity of a spirit; and that it is the pre-existence meant in Wordsworth's 'Ode on Immortality,' and that

which Plato himself meant to teach ; and that it certainly is the doctrine of Christianity taught by Jesus Christ. But even this doctrine Mr. Alcott has never taught dogmatically. It has come out spontaneously from the children themselves, and, almost invariably, as soon as they come to see the divine nature of the conscience and the sentiments.¹

¹ Possibly Miss Peabody did not quite understand the full force of Mr. Alcott's belief in the doctrine of pre-existence at that time. I find in his diary this passage, dated Oct. 5, 1834 : " I had an interesting conversation with L. G. on the doctrine of an ante-terrestrial life ; she is striving to bring this great truth down to the apprehension of the understanding, and crowd into the present both past and future. It is a hard saying, which she cannot receive, — the burden is too great for her unredeemed spirit to bear. Thou child, poor pensioner of earth ! Naked, foodless, alone ? No ! Thou bringest with thee a spirit clad in celestial array, manna untasted by this world's tenants ; and myriads of divinities and friends accompany thee on thy descent to this dark orb. All earth's combined powers cannot take from thee thine armor, glittering with the hues of heaven ; neither can they starve thy spirit nor put out its light, nor estrange thee from the friend thou lovest." He had made himself familiar with what he habitually quoted in after years, — Wordsworth's " Ode on Intimations of Immortality," — and particularly these lines : —

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home."

“The objections made against the intellectual influences of Mr. Alcott’s school, by those who do not know much about it, are chiefly of the negative character, which the foregoing pages have attempted to answer. There is one, however, of a positive character, on which I wish to make some observations. It is said that Mr. Alcott cultivates the imagination of his scholars inordinately, by leading them to the works of the poets, and to the prose creations of such writers as Krummacher, Bunyan, Carové, etc. But he has no intention of cultivating one faculty more than another; his plan is to follow the natural order of the mind. He asks a child questions in order to turn his attention upon what passes within his own mind; and what the child says, when making this inward survey, will determine what faculties are most active in his nature for the time being. Mr. Alcott, by pursuing this course faithfully, has found that the imagination is the first faculty which comes forth, leading all the others in its train; he has, therefore, not failed to meet it and give it food. But, wisely fed and governed, the imagination need not be feared.”

In connection with the passage above quoted, which was published in 1836, when the second edition of the “Record” came out, from the press of James Munroe, Miss Peabody wrote,—and the remark is worth quoting for the benefit of those who may read that remarkable book: “It has been said that the language of Mr. Alcott, in the conversations, must have been unintelligible to

the children. It should be remembered that in writing a record at the time I was obliged to abridge a good deal. I therefore merely gave the sense of Mr. Alcott's questions and remarks, but took great pains to remember the exact words of the children." This remark is important, for it not only shows the fact, but also the sort of criticism which this noble method of education early encountered. From the journals of some of the children early in 1836 passages may be quoted in illustration of what has been said respecting its practical nature; the writer in this instance being a boy only ten years old: —

“ When I arrived at school this morning, I found a good many of the scholars there, and we began by singing Old Hundred, Mrs. Alcott playing on the piano and leading us with her voice, which I think is a very fine one. We sang for about a quarter of an hour, and then Mr. Alcott explained to us the words we had just been singing, which I think were very interesting and characteristic. The reading was very interesting. It was about the visitation of God to Moses, from a thunder-cloud, on the top of Mount Sinai, and when he delivered to him the Commandments, which now appear to me much closer and much more strict than before. Mr. Alcott asked all those who had never disobeyed one of the Commandments in their whole life to hold up their hands, — not one held up their hands; but there was one who I really believe never broke the Commandments. Who was it? That God alone knows. The rest

of the morning I spent in reading. In the evening we all signed a note to Mr. Alcott, requesting that he would give us a trial of conscience. He did; and this night I can say — though may be not ever before — that I did obey conscience."

The same boy, five weeks later, made an entry in his journal which shows exactly what sort of boy he was by nature: —

February 24. "Mr. Alcott read to us from the third chapter of John, and the part I was most interested in was about a man's being born again. I was not very attentive the first part of the conversation, as I got thinking about other things, such as percussion caps, etc.; but the conversation soon interested me a great deal more than the percussion caps and other little things (which I was thinking about at first), and I soon became so much interested in the conversation that I thought about nothing else. The conversation ended at a little before twelve o'clock, and we had recess for about quarter of an hour, after which we wrote in our journals and other writing-books."

¹ This same boy, whose mind ran on percussion caps, thus paraphrased the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father that dwelleth in heaven, hallowed be thy title. Thy kingdom come, thy wishes be performed in this world as they are in thy dwelling-place. Give us this day what we usually live upon, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us. And let us not go into temptation, but protect us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and power and glory, always. AMEN." This lad might perhaps have been qualified to assist the revisers of King James's Version.

A few months before this date, on Saturday preceding his thirty-sixth birthday, Mr. Alcott received a pleasing tribute, which he thus describes in the diary for Saturday, November 28: "This morning my pupils celebrated my birthday at the schoolroom. As they had made the arrangements and were deeply interested in the festival, I sought to please them. They assembled at the usual hour. At ten o'clock they crowned me with laurels, and Louisa, — my little girl, — being three years old. An address was then given in the name of the school by one of the pupils, at the close of which they presented me with a fine edition of *Paradise Lost*. I then gave them a short account of my life; ending this, an ode was pronounced by one of the little girls, and we then partook of some refreshment. The whole gave much pleasure, and was significant of good will as well as gratitude to me for my instruction." It does not appear who wrote this ode, — perhaps Mrs. Alcott; but a few stanzas may be quoted, —

" A time for joy, — for joy !
 Let joy then swell around ;
 From every girl and boy
 Let joy's full tones resound.

" This hour in love we come,
 With hearts of happy mirth ;

We 've sallied forth from home
To celebrate a birth.

CHORUS: A time for joy, — for joy, etc.

“The birth of one we love,
Our friend and teacher too,
Who lifteth us above
The Bad we would pursue;

“Who openeth to our spirit
The Ever-living One,
The Good that we inherit
From his beloved Son.”

Not everything in connection with this school was so agreeable as little festivals of this sort. Four months earlier the diary contains these remarks: —

“Both my children are suffering for the want of purer air, renovating imagery, and spiritual inspiration. I ought to devote this month to them. I have thought of taking them to my mother's in Wolcott, and giving myself wholly to their culture. They are morbid in sensibility, dimmed in intellectual vision, and require the benefits of natural and spiritual sympathy to raise them from their depression. The city does not give their young natures room; they are fettered and fall back to prey on sentiment, instinct, ideas, that have not been allowed to flow forth amid encroaching circumstances. But I may be unable to meet the expense of this purpose. My income is small, inadequate to meet the necessary claims of my family and also carry

on the school. I am involved in debt, arising from the unsuccessful issue of previous experiments in human culture. What I earn is all pledged by obligations to others, and I have already anticipated the earnings of the next two or three years, even should I be successful. And so the claims of my family are to be set aside for the claims of others. Thus I am bound, perplexed. Yet a day of deliverance shall come. I shall be made free, — it may be through the discipline of law, through the infliction of civil and social obligations. Yet will I go on ; great results are to spring from the little seed that I shall sow."

From this burden of debt,—which began to accumulate as early as the unsuccessful ventures in Virginia, and was increased by the disappointments in Philadelphia arising from the death of his patron, Mr. Haines,—Mr. Alcott could not escape so long as he remained in Boston. It was in fact increased by the outlay for books, works of art, etc., used by him in the Temple School; and these were finally seized by the sheriff and sold, when events soon to be related brought that school to an end, and deprived him even of the small income thus obtained. But for the present (1835–1836) he went on courageously, extending his course of instruction, and engaging in a long series of conversations on the New Testament, which were edited afterward, and brought the wrath

of Boston down upon him in 1837. In the autumn of 1835 he allowed Mr. R. H. Dana, the poet, to give lectures on English literature at the Temple; and under date of October 12 the diary says:—

“To-day I began upon the scheme of exercises for the coming six months at school, excepting the arrangement for the afternoon. I shall soon meet my pupils for the morning alone, Miss Peabody taking them in the afternoon. A slight alteration will be made for Wednesdays and Saturdays. I shall close school on those days at twelve o'clock, and substitute the reading of the journals, reviewing, and drawing in place of some other study on other days. Mr. Dana gives a course of conversations on English literature at my rooms on these days, after twelve o'clock. He addresses young ladies, spending an hour with them twice a week. His object is to excite an interest in the English Classics, through the study of the most interesting writers. Mr. Dana is well qualified for this task, and the manner selected for conducting the instruction is at once simple and effective. He reads with them, and encourages them to communicate their impressions on the subject matter; while he regards himself as an inquirer along with the class. I shall be happy to give him the benefit of my rooms for this purpose.”

Mr. Dana was the brother-in-law of Washington Allston, the artist, who was also, by a former marriage, the brother-in-law of Dr. Channing.

Mr. Alcott made Allston's acquaintance early in this year, and his account of their first interview is full of interest. It occurs in the diary for Jan. 13, 1835:—

“ After an interesting day in my school, and a period of meditation yesterday, devoted to the inner life, I walked with Miss Peabody to Cambridgeport to see Mr. Allston, the artist, a man whom I had long wished to see. We reached his house at an early hour after dark, and remained with him until past midnight. Interesting subjects were discussed,— art, conception and execution, Canova (whom he conceived to be a man of talent, not of genius), Coleridge, Wordsworth, and, as collateral topics, Hazlitt, Northcote, Mrs. Siddons, Miss Kemble, Matthews, De Quincey, etc. I was particularly impressed with the uncommon aptness and modesty of this man of genius, this man of higher endowments and skill in the art of painting than, perhaps, any other in our country. I felt myself in the presence of a superior spirit, an external shaping of the higher traits of the human soul; the power of genius was there. Mr. Allston was an intimate friend of Coleridge; he saw much of him while he resided in London, and travelled with him on the Continent. They passed six months together in Rome. His conception of Coleridge's character and genius is most exalted. He spoke of him as being *versed* in all things, yet wanting nothing in original endowments. If there was any absence of power in

any one faculty of his spirit, it was in humor, — deep, broad humor, the usual property of the English mind. In this there might be a slight defect, but he had ‘more wit, genuine wit, than any other ten men in England.’ One fact concerning Coleridge was to me deeply interesting; and the phenomenon might have been looked for, *a priori*, from a spirit like his. Mr. Allston said there could not be conceived a greater difference of appearance in the same person’s countenance than during Coleridge’s times of conversation and of thought. When absorbed in meditation, ‘the outward man seemed to be a corpse! His eyes were inverted, as it were, and turned inwards, the under lip fell, and the general expression was that of idiocy, so entirely was the soul withdrawn from the external world and the animal functions. But the appearance of a friend, a stranger, any human being, seemed to awaken him from this exterior sleep; the eyes radiated supernatural splendor, the mouth was full of meaning, and the whole countenance was perhaps more purely angelic than that of any living man. He gave us the idea of a seraph more fully than had been given in others.’”

The elder Dana, like his more distinguished son, the author of “Two Years before the Mast,” was a reader of Coleridge and Wordsworth, but an Orthodox Christian of the Anglican Church. It was he who took Miss Martineau to visit the Temple School, as appears by this entry in the diary for December, 1835:—

"I have seen Mr. Richard Dana and Miss Martineau since the date of these last pages. The former I visited at his own house, passing an evening with him in very interesting conversation on literary, theological, and philosophical subjects. The latter I saw at Mr. Tuckerman's with many persons in whom I feel an interest, among whom were Mr. G. Hillard, Mr. Emerson (whose lecture on Shakspeare I attended the same evening), Mr. Waterston, and others. I had but a few words with Miss Martineau. I was interested from the little conversation that ensued. I intend soon to call on Mr. Allston and Rev. James Walker. I have seen them a little, and found that we have felt and talked on the same topics, and have come to views not wholly unlike, though occupied in pursuits so seemingly dissimilar. I take this unity of opinion and sentiment as some confirmation of the truths to which we have come. I passed an hour with Dr. Channing an evening or two since. As he was going out, I was deprived of my expected interview and shall call again soon."

At this time Mr. Alcott had been for some weeks conducting conversations on the Life of Christ at his schoolroom on week days, and was now holding Sunday readings there occasionally. It was perhaps these Sunday services at the Temple which gave the first strong suggestion to the people of Boston that this schoolmaster was seeking to change their opinions on subjects traditionally sacred. Nothing could be more modest and

reverent than this new form of worship, and only to his private diary did Mr. Alcott commit his anticipations respecting it:—

Dec. 15, 1835. “I met some of my pupils this Sunday morning for the second time. Though the snow was deep, and the morning unpleasant, I was gratified at finding so many present with some of their friends. This beginning of my Sunday Readings is encouraging; I trust the interest excited at the beginning will not die away by time and repetition. I see in this little assemblage the germ of a Church that shall bring not only the young, but adults (parents and others) to hear the simple words of the Gospel, and find something in them suited to their spiritual growth and joy. Successful preaching implies the utterance of profoundest truth in simple phrase, touching the common sense of every one, the child or the adult. In our language there are simple, living, universal terms (understood alike by the sage and the child, by every unsophisticated being) for the representation of the common wants and supplies of our spiritual life. To find these terms, and use them in their living sense, is the art of the instructor. I am to teach—and I am to teach that which is of universal import—the common nature that we inherit. I shall illustrate this first to the young mind; in the faith that as I succeed in unfolding the deep things of our being to the sense of childhood, I shall clear the vision of the grown man to his own state, and the means of renovation. I shall

hold up the mirror of childhood to the view of adolescence, that it may see the presence of the Infinite and sinless One. A church, when it shall come, will give me full scope. Unshackled by the time-worn forms and ceremonies that cramp and stupefy the mind in the discharge of worship; having young and yet unbeguiled spirits, whose sense is clear, whose instincts alive; and having no predecessor whose forms can narrow my movements, — I can go on in the true spirit of induction, finding what is wanted by consulting the laws of the young mind. I trust I shall unfold some of the essential grounds and conditions of man's spiritual being, shall popularize a true sense of human nature, and turn the minds of men to the culture of childhood as the primary duty. I seek to be simple and to have docility, to apprehend what God sendeth to my apprehension, and to labor and love for the sake of laboring and loving."

In this spirit Mr. Alcott published, early in 1837, the first volume of his "Conversations with Children on the Gospels." They were reported, as former conversations had been, by Miss Peabody, and occasionally by her sister Sophia, who five years later married Nathaniel Hawthorne. In a short preface to the book, Miss Peabody said: —

"These conversations were recorded, because it was thought that they might prove a model for parents and teachers who were desirous of giving a spiritual culture

to the young; and also, because Mr. Alcott felt that what the children should freely say would prove to be a new order of Christian Evidences, by showing the affinity of their natures with that of Jesus. That they have proved to be evidence to many persons who have listened to them, and that some parents and teachers have acknowledged them to be models of the true method of approaching children on these subjects, is a sufficient reason why they should be published."

Mr. Alcott himself gave a preface, in which he spoke of the book as the introduction to a longer course of conversations on the Life of Christ, recorded in the Gospels; and he added, in a form of speech which was now becoming habitual in his diary, this summary of the contents of the book, and what he expected from its publication:—

"It is the Record of an attempt to unfold the Idea of Spirit from the Consciousness of Childhood; and to trace its Intellectual and Corporeal Relations, its Temptations and Disciplines, its Struggles and Conquests, while in the Flesh. To this end, the character of Jesus has been presented to the consideration of children, as the brightest Symbol of Spirit; and they have been encouraged to express their views regarding it. The Conductor of these conversations has reverently explored their consciousness, for the testimony which it might furnish in favor of the truth of Christianity. . . . It is with no little solicitude that he ventures these documents before the eye of others. He feels that his book

should be studied in Simplicity. It is, in no small measure, the production of children. It is a record of their consciousness ; a natural history of the undepraved spirit. It is the testimony of unspoiled natures to the spiritual purity of Jesus. It is a revelation of the Divinity in the soul of childhood. Like the Sacred volume — on which it is, indeed, a juvenile commentary, — of which it is an interpretation — it cannot be at once apprehended in all its bearings, and find its true value.

“There may be those, however, who shall avail themselves of its statements, views, and speculations, to the detriment of religion and humanity ; not perceiving that it is a work intended rather to awaken thought, enkindle feeling, and quicken to duty, than to settle opinions or promulgate sentiments of any kind. Whoever shall find its significance will scarce treat with disrespect these products of the sacred being of childhood. For Childhood utters sage things, worthy of all note ; and he who scoffs at its improvisations, or perverts its simple sayings, proves the corruption of his own being, and his want of reverence for the Good, the Beautiful, the True, and the Holy. He beholds not the Face of the Heavenly Father.”

But this Boston schoolmaster, like his great London predecessor, two hundred years before, when he wrote a book called “Tetrachordon,” found a reception from his public far other than he had hoped. Being of a gentler and less sarcastic nature than Milton, he did not reply, as he

might have done, in the words of that famous sonnet:—

“I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs:
As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs
Rail'd at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.”

Mr. Alcott's book and Milton's treatise were extremely unlike, but they had a similarity in certain points,—

“The subject new; it walked the town awhile,
Numbering good intellects, now seldom pored on.
Cries the stall-reader, ‘Bless us! What a word on
A titlepage is this!’ And some in file
Stand spelling faults, while one might walk to Mile-
End-Green.”

Boston Common was not so far from State Street as Mile-End-Green was from St. Paul's Churchyard; but the Boston critics went on “spelling false” long after they had got beyond the Temple School, where it stood facing the Common. The publishing of the *Conversations*, late in January, 1837, was the occasion of a fierce attack in the Boston newspapers in the following March. Their hostile criticism, both of Mr. Alcott and his book, was singularly varied in its nature. The “*Daily Advertiser*,” then edited by Nathan

Hale, the brother-in-law of Edward Everett, Governor of Massachusetts, complained that "on the most important and difficult questions this teacher, while he endeavors to extract from his pupils every thought which may come uppermost in their minds, takes care studiously to conceal his own opinions." But this was not all: "In some cases he gives opinions, and sometimes opinions of very questionable soundness." He supposes, we are told, "that a new era in philosophy is dawning upon us in the discovery that childhood is a type of the divinity;" and the "Advertiser" sneeringly adds that "these conversations appear to be the first fruits of the new attempt to draw wisdom from babes and sucklings," — as if, forsooth there were anything unchristian or unscriptural in such an attempt! The "Courier," a paper justly celebrated afterward for standing firmly by the unpopular cause, was more abusive than the "Advertiser," — compared Mr. Alcott with Kneeland, who had been indicted for blasphemy, and suggested that this teacher also should be brought before the "honorable judge of our municipal court." The indignation of Emerson was aroused at this injustice; and he wrote a note which was published in the "Courier," the "Advertiser" having declined to print it. But this protest had no effect on Mr.

Buckingham, who soon after quoted in his "Courier" the opinion of a distinguished professor of Harvard College, to the effect that "one third of Mr. Alcott's book was absurd, one third was blasphemous, and one third was obscene." "Such," remarked Mr. Buckingham, "will be the deliberate opinion of those who diligently read and soberly reflect."

Such was not the opinion of Emerson, who, the instant that he read Nathan Hale's tirade, wrote to his friend in Boston this letter: —

CONCORD, March 24, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I exceedingly regret the unfavorable notice of the book on the School in the 'Advertiser,' and that unfavorable paragraph in the 'Centinel.' The latter contains its own antidote. The former might injure the school with the timid and inquiring. As soon as I came to town from Salem, where I was, I endeavored to find Mr. Hale, to see if he would receive a paragraph of comment on his own; but he was not at his office all the forenoon. I have written him to-day, and enclosed a plain paragraph such as I thought he could and would print on Monday, but I don't know. . . . I hate to have all the little dogs barking at you, for you have something better to do than attend to them; but every beast must do after his kind, and why not these? And you will hold by yourself, and presently forget them. Whatever you do at school or concerning the school, pray let not the

pen halt; for that must be your last and longest lever to lift the world withal. And if you would compare chapters of accidents with celebrated men, go read the paper on Mirabeau by Carlyle in the new 'Westminster Review.' It is all thunder, and monishes us of the might that in us lies, even in depression and under the frown of the incapable. You are so deeply grounded in God that I shall not fear for you any loss of faith in your ends by opposition; but I do not want these people to shut the school for the moment. But you will bide your time, and with views so large and peculiar can better afford to wait than other men. Look at my Mirabeau again.

I talked with Dr. Channing. I found him just to your character, wholly, but staggered by your opinions, and, as I think, not just to your powers. I told him so, and told him I was sure he had never heard you converse like yourself; that I was sure you two did not meet as men, but stood on uneven platforms. And he was very good-natured, and seemed willing to hear and know. I shall be in town Monday or Tuesday, and mean to come and see you.

Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON.

Emerson followed this by a communication in the "Courier," which its editor, Joseph Tinker Buckingham, introduced with a well-deserved compliment to the writer,—that he might, had he known Bronson Alcott, have extended with equal

propriety, to the man he was scurrilously attacking: "The truly Christian temper and amiable disposition of the writer of the following communication are so well known to us that it is really a pleasure to gratify him by placing it in our columns, although our own opinion of the *Conversations* and the Schoolmaster who has adopted so singular a plan of instruction has undergone no change."

To the Editor of the "Courier":

SIR, — I have seen in a "*Courier*" of last week a severe notice of a book lately published in this city, called "*Conversations on the Gospels*." In that work a passage or two occurs which, separated from the connection in the book, might give great uneasiness to many readers. Precisely these passages one of the daily papers selected, and, dragging them out of the protection of the philosophy and religion which hedged them round, held them up to censure in its columns. These unlucky scriptures, innocent enough to the reader of the whole book, were copied with horror into another paper, and now again have kindled the anger of your correspondent; and even your known urbanity has failed you, sir, for the moment.

In behalf of this book, I have but one plea to make, — this, namely, let it be read. Any reasonable man will perceive that fragments out of a new theory of Christian instruction are not in the best place for examination between the *Price Current* and the *Ship-*

ping-list. Try the effect of a passage from Plato's *Phædo*, or the Confessions of Saint Augustine in the same place.

Mr. Alcott has given proof, in the beautiful introduction to this work, as all who have read it know, of a strong mind and pure heart. A practical teacher, he has dedicated for years his rare gifts to the science of education. These Conversations contain abundant evidence of extraordinary thought, either in the teacher or the pupils, or in both. He aims to make children think, and, in every question of a moral nature, to send them back on themselves for an answer. He aims to show children something holy in their own consciousness; thereby to make them really reverent, and to make the New Testament a living book to them.

Mr. Alcott's methods cannot be said to have had a fair trial. But he is making an experiment in which all the friends of education are interested. And I ask you, sir, whether it be wise or just to add to the anxieties of his enterprise a public clamor against some detached sentences of a book which, as a whole, is pervaded with original thought and sincere piety.

R. W. EMERSON.

A young clergyman, afterwards famous (James Freeman Clarke), with that gentle satire so characteristic of him in after years, offered this suggestion to Mr. Buckingham:—

“We perceive the Boston ‘*Courier*’ recommends that Mr. Alcott be presented to the Grand Jury on account

of his book. We respectfully suggest, in addition, that the indictment be in the words of that formerly found against Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus. In Xenophon's 'Memorabilia,' chapter 1, it runs thus: 'Socrates is accused of not believing in the gods in which the city believes, but introducing other new divinities; he is also accused of corrupting the minds of the young.' The two cases would then be exactly parallel. Or perhaps the form as given by Plato (Apology of Socrates, section 3) would be thought more suitable: 'Socrates is accused of searching out things under the earth and above the heavens, of making the worse appear the better reason, and of teaching others the same.'"

The parallel between Alcott and Socrates was natural and appropriate; but Boston did not proceed even so far as to throw this new corrupter of youth into its prison, as it had thrown Garrison there, in October, 1835.¹ Alcott indeed resembled Socrates more than Boston resembled Athens. He had lent to his friend Emerson a manuscript intended for publication, and this was returned soon after, with the following letter:—

¹ On his return from the first visit ever made by him to Concord, Mr. Alcott (Oct. 21, 1835) visited Garrison in the Leverett Street Jail, accompanied by Mrs. Alcott. Some years earlier, in company with his cousin, Samuel E. Sewall, he had been present at Garrison's first meetings in Boston, and was from that time an emancipationist.

Boston, Friday, April 14, 1837.

MY DEAR SIR, — I depend on seeing you very soon, so I return your MSS. with thanks and no further comments. Very soon after making these acknowledgments of confidence and hope, your faith and patience have been exercised. I never regretted more than in this case my own helplessness in all practical contingencies. For a knowing and efficient friend can do a man, with a mob, a better service than he himself. But I was created a seeing eye, and not a useful hand. When the hard times have passed over presently, people will not be so sour and peevish, and Reason will be justified of all her children.

Do not fail to visit me as soon as you can. I am in town on inevitable business which leaves me no leisure.

Your friend, R. W. EMERSON.

Mr. Alcott says in his diary about this date (April 13, 1837): —

“This has been a week of few incidents, but of much sober reflection. An unusual degree of excitement has pervaded this metropolis regarding my book. I have been severely censured, I learn, even by friends to my enterprise and who respect my character, for the publication of this work. At one time the excitement threatened a mob. The plan was to make the assault at my Friday evening conversation. But no such outrage was effected, and the minds of the disaffected are now settling into quietude. Such a state of feeling

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calls for serious reflection. I have, of course, been much excited in this way. What my future movements shall be, time must decide. At present, I see not my way. The only course which, as a man of honor and dignity, I can pursue, is to preserve unbroken silence upon this subject, inasmuch as I have committed no offence, nor stepped from the line of my duty. As yet I have said nothing. The public prints have raised a hue and cry; the uproar has raged, but it begins to spend itself, and will soon die away. Should some one see fit to speak in my defence, I will thank him for the generous deed. If none shall speak, then will I rest my appeal on the silent testimony of my life, and this shall refute the slander and correct the misapprehension."

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One of the chief causes of this outcry and threatened mob was the presence in the book of a few passages concerning birth, particularly in the notes, which Mr. Alcott had thought it right to add in an Appendix, rather against the wish of Miss Peabody, who foresaw that they might cause trouble. But Miss Peabody's sister, afterward Mrs. Hawthorne, who had taken down this particular conversation, wrote to Mr. Alcott from Salem (June 9, 1837):—

"I could not have imagined that those conversations about *Birth* which I recorded would not be received with reverence and thanks, by all who might have the

privilege of either hearing or reading them. I felt my own mind elevated by them. I wonder people do not perceive in what an entangled net they are fastened, and how they degrade themselves by admitting such base thoughts into their minds. I heard you were quite calm amid the turmoil. I had expected it, and do not wonder. New ideas are always received with consternation; and conventional habits of thought are always like things of adamant round the general mind. In my heart I sorely lament 'the public stupidity,' as Sarah Clarke calls it, — she has written several times to Elizabeth [Peabody] since your book was published,¹ and expressed in no measured terms her indignation at the false and factitious notions of the community, and her thanksgiving that at last your friends have come forward a little to assert their sense of the injustice done you. Both she and her brother James felt just right

¹ The sale of this book was at first rapid, but was soon stopped by the ungenerous comments of the newspapers. About January 20, when it had been published less than three weeks, Mr. Alcott's diary says: "I learn from my booksellers that three hundred copies of the first volume of the *Conversations* have been sold. These have found readers chiefly in this vicinity; few have been sent abroad. The sale thus far is very encouraging, and if it continues, as may reasonably be expected, especially if the book be reviewed, I shall have no cause for complaint with the public. The reception of the first will determine the fortune of the second volume, which I hope to have out early in February." It did, in fact, come out about Feb. 15, 1837, but had no such success as the first one.

about it; and you cannot doubt that I respond wholly to such opinions. Elizabeth, also, feels the absurdity of the kind of fault-finding there has been, — it is only that the community have not yet arrived at a state pure enough to comprehend the essence of things.

“But I mourn for the library books; for it is with a most bitter pang that I heard not long since that you were about to sell your library, — that choice and beautiful library. Perhaps you know that I have your ‘*Biographia Literaria*’ of Coleridge. I shall send it to you when I find a safe conveyance, and am glad I had it, to save it from the general wreck.”

The sentiments of these women of delicate susceptibility — sure to have seen a fault, if grossness ever could be a fault of Bronson Alcott — is sufficient evidence that the proscribed book was unobjectionable. Miss Anna Thaxter of Hingham uttered her testimony, also, when Miss Martineau’s attack on the Temple School came to hand. Writing to Mrs. Alcott, she says: “How unjust, how uncandid Miss Martineau has been to Mr. Alcott! What a total distortion of his principles has she made! There is much good sense and discriminating observation in her book, but on this ‘she speaks as one of the foolish women speak.’ She utters words without knowledge.”

Mrs. Alcott’s brother, who had left Connecticut and become an ardent abolitionist and an agent

of Garrison's Antislavery Society, was in 1836-1837 minister of a parish in the old Puritan town of Scituate. With the instinct of affection and good sense, he had foretold the consequences, to the author, of venturing with his book before the Boston public, and the descendants of the Massachusetts Puritans. Six weeks before the outcry burst forth, he wrote thus to Mrs. Alcott, from his parsonage:—

MY DEAR SISTER, — Mr. Alcott's book, which I have been impatient to see, has just come to hand. I am sure he has struck a new vein of hidden ore. The book I shall most carefully commend to the most serious study of our Sunday-school teachers and to parents generally. I shall ask no one to read it who will not promise to ponder it well, — not only so, but make some experiment with children in order to satisfy themselves that they are beings endowed with the faculties of thinking, reasoning, judging, etc. It is not to be expected that this book will meet with a very favorable reception. The Orthodox will scowl at it, because it shows that man is not by nature what their theory of religion requires he should be. The Unitarians will be afraid to give it unqualified praise, because it expresses too plainly the result to which some of their prominent doctrines inevitably lead, and the public (they will think) are not yet prepared for such an exposure. The worldly, the great, the wise will sneer at it, because

its tendency is not to make good merchants or lawyers or civil engineers or manufacturing agents. The giddy and gay will turn from it at once, because it will require them to think. And now, when you have deducted all these, how large a number will remain? Large enough, I trust and believe, to keep the great idea which the book discloses forever before the minds of men, until it has effected some radical changes in the theory and principles of education. Mr. Alcott may not live to see all this good done; he may never in this world be rewarded for his pains. But he has uttered a word which will never cease to sound intelligibly to some minds, and stir them deeply.

I am grieved to hear that you have had so much to try the patience of your spirit and the strength of your body. I have feared that you might break down; but then I know power of endurance in woman is apt to be commensurate with the demands upon her, and my prayer has been, and is, that your strength may be equal to your trials.

Your affectionate brother,

SAMUEL J. MAY.

The allusion in this last paragraph is to the pecuniary difficulties which had already, in 1836, begun to embarrass the Alcott family, and which were instantly increased by the denunciation of the Temple School in the newspapers. It had begun in 1834 with thirty pupils, had received as

many as forty at one time, and in the autumn of 1836 had more than twenty-five. But it fell to ten pupils in the spring of 1837, and after lingering along for a year or two, with one or two changes of place, was finally given up in 1839. The immediate occasion of closing it then was the unwillingness of Mr. Alcott's patrons to have their children educated in the same room with a colored child, whom in 1838 he had admitted; and when the protesting parents found Mr. Alcott determined not to dismiss this child, they withdrew their own children, leaving him with only five pupils, — his own three daughters, a child of Mr. William Russell, and young Miss Robinson, the cause of offence. Up to this time (June, 1839) the receipts of Mr. Alcott for tuition since he began his school at the Temple, five years before, had been \$5,730; namely, in the first year \$1,794, the second, \$1,649, the third, \$1,395, the fourth, after the attack in the newspapers, \$549, and in the last year only \$343. The expenses of rent, furniture, assistant-teachers, and the maintenance of the family had been much more than this; and in April, 1837, the costly furniture, school library, and other apparatus of the Temple School were sold at auction. The affair of the colored girl began in October, 1838, although its full effect was not experienced until the following year.

Upon learning what was going on, Mr. May wrote from South Scituate (Nov. 3, 1838) as follows to Mr. Alcott: —

DEAR BROTHER, — I heard at Hingham last week of the new trial to which your faith and patience have been subjected. If suffering for righteousness' sake (as I believe) is the method by which we are to be made perfect, you and my sister are in the way to that desirable end. But I am anxious to hear from you the particulars of the case, — to know how the colored child came to be introduced into your school, — what has been, on the whole, the effect, and who are they who have taken offence.

At such a distance of time it is hardly worth while to answer the questions of Mr. May. All Boston, with a few exceptions, was then hostile to the social equality of the two races; and Garrison, Phillips, and their small band of abolitionists were the only supporters Mr. Alcott was likely to find in his decision to stand by his principles. That he must do, of course; and it endeared him to the noble company of emancipationists, who more conspicuously but not more firmly advocated what the defeated schoolmaster lived to see accomplished.

The immediate shock of defeat and disappointment, in the spring of 1837, broke down the health

of Mr. Alcott (never very firm at that period), and in July his friends became anxious for him. At this time Emerson again appears, with this hospitable invitation: —

CONCORD, July 27, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I grieve to hear you have been sick and are still feeble. I was in town day before yesterday, but with such imperative errands as would not permit my visiting you. Is the school suspended? In that case what better can you do than come out here instantly to spend a fortnight with me? My wife is a capital nurse, and joyfully offers her services. We have no company, and Concord is Lethe's fat wharf for lounging; and lounging is the first medicine for such as you. If you will come here and get well, we will agree on hours of sitting together and apart, and nobody shall be allowed to annoy you.

In the hope that you will, I add nothing.

Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON.

Before this note came, however, the invalid had been sent by the dear wife on a visit to her brother in Plymouth County. From that seaside retreat, which was to be the family home for a time in 1839, Mr. Alcott wrote to his wife in Boston. The "young disciple" was Rev. W. P. Tilden, who for many years was a parish minister. "Mr. Sewall" was a cousin of Mrs. Alcott, then preach-

ing at Cohasset, where his son-in-law afterward preached for half a century; and "Saint Anna" was Miss Anna Quincy Thaxter of Hingham, an early acquaintance of the Mays and Sewalls. The "advocate of the Prussian system" was Dr. Julius, who had been sent from Prussia to examine the schools of New England.

SOUTH SCITUATE, July 28, 1837.

MY DEAR, — I write a word, just to tell you how well I am; for truly, since I began to breathe this sweet country air, drink this pure water, and taste of my good hostess's wheaten loaf, I entertain the pleasing hope of returning a somewhat comelier specimen of the man Adam than when I left you last. Let me assure you that I sleep soundly, have a good appetite, enjoy conversation, and am getting strong again. Wine, though prescribed, I now eschew, and tea is distasteful. No further need of resorting to the comforting little bottle that you and mother put into my trunk, so womanly. Then for exercise, we ride or walk daily, threading the lanes, edging the river shores, sitting under the shade or bathing, as the time favors. I rise refreshed, — the fine morning breeze intruding at my window, which, like Christian Pilgrim's, opens to the sunrise. Here, too, for company, besides your good brother's household, I have fallen upon a young disciple, a Mr. Tilden, ship carpenter, but emulous of becoming a preacher of the Carpenter's son's Gospel, a sensible man and likely to honor his profession. This

afternoon Mr. Sewall is expected, and in the evening the Sunday-school teachers meet in your brother's study. Next week I purpose accompanying him to Plymouth, and on my way home to stop a day at Hingham with the advocate of the Prussian system of instruction, and while there meet Saint Anna. My love to mother, and tell Psyche and the other two¹ that I hope to see them at the cottage by Friday or Saturday of next week at farthest. Mr. May wishes you were here; so do I, and the little ones. I am more and more for the country. Write soon, and in the mean while take this little assurance of the affection of your

A. B. A.

It was before this illness of Mr. Alcott that his wife wrote (April 23, 1837) a letter, half humorous and half pathetic, to her kind brother,—a foreshadowing in its style of the characteristic manner in which her daughter Louisa wrote so many years, for the laughter and tears of young and old. This letter says:—

“You have seen how roughly they have handled my husband. He has been a quiet sufferer, but not the less a sufferer because quiet. He stands to it, through all, that this is not an ungrateful, cruel world. I rail; he reasons, and consoles me as if I were the injured one. I do not know a more exemplary hero under

¹ His three daughters.

trials than this same 'visionary.' He has more philosophy than half the persons who are afraid he is thinking too much. His school is very small, or will be at the commencement of another quarter. He will begin with about ten or a dozen here for the summer term. I sometimes think extreme poverty awaits us. With the idea come before my mind a thousand enterprises and expedients. But oh, my girls! what exposure may they be subjected to! But I do not woo doubt, but I wed sorrow, and I surely do not need that alliance to promote either my faith or hope. Mr. Gilman has a pretty notice of his school and book in the 'Southern Rose,' and Mr. Robbins has a MS. on his table for the 'Christian Register' in defence of Mr. Alcott's methods and principles, if he can find room for it in his paper some time or other. How ready men are to accuse; how slow to defend! I am no angel, though I expect to be one of these days. I never aspired to any kind of a pinion but a goose-quill, and I shall be very apt to flop that about when there is anybody who cares to see my flight."

It is needless at this day to inveigh against the narrow philistinism of Boston towards Alcott and his faithful friends in 1837. We may remember it was the same Boston which in 1835 had allowed its "gentlemen of property and standing" to drag Garrison along the street with a halter round his neck, and that Garrison's statue to-day sits in placid triumph amid the palaces of the same

wealthy class of that city; the same Boston which sent its mob in 1836 to burn a Catholic convent, and in 1837 mobbed poor Irish Catholics in Broad Street, but which now has a majority of Catholic voters. Time at last brings all things even. Writing to his mother at the end of this bitter Boston experience, Mr. Alcott said: "Were I able, I should visit you during the summer. But all my means are spent on this ungrateful city, — which just now refuses to bestow anything on me, and, I am almost ready to believe, would starve me and mine. But it will be sorry for this by and by, and if it shall then be too late to make amends to me, may bless my children instead." The mother's reply is not given; but Mrs. Alcott, the faithful wife, with a keener pen, wrote the verdict of the future, which may well close this chapter: —

"It is a low state of moral discrimination which will give the man an honorable discharge who has been twenty years gambling in fancy stocks, but drives into the regions of starvation an exalted spirit, whose desires and efforts for the twenty best years of his life have been to elevate and improve the moral and intellectual condition of mankind. I try not to believe it; but the cruel sacrifices we are daily called upon to make compel me to despair of better things yet awhile. Can Mr. Alcott have time to work out his problem, we

may yet hide our faces and strike our breasts for shame at our incredulity. I say *ours*, for I have been among the sceptics, and he still thinks me almost impotent in faith. But his patient endurance often staggers me, and the undaunted manner with which he assumes his burdens and cares, giving up, with cheerful submission, those things which I know are dear to his heart and lovely to his eye, for the rigors of toil and privation — fill me with admiration.¹ There is no sighing nor complaining, but silent bowing to the dispensations of injustice and ignorance, — where he had reasonably expected intelligent co-operation or loving patience. Let us, my dear brother, sustain him. This is my resolution. Depend upon it, a reality is here, which does not show itself all on the surface. There is a depth from which pure and living water wells up at times, to refresh thirsty souls, — supplied from the source of all life."

¹ Emerson wrote, years afterward, in this same high sense: "The attitude is the main thing. John Bradshaw was all his life a consul sitting in judgment on kings. Carlyle has, best of all men in England, kept the manly attitude in his time. His errors of opinion are as nothing in comparison with this merit, in my opinion. And if I look for a counterpart in my neighborhood, Thoreau and Alcott are the best, and in majesty Alcott exceeds. This *aplomb* cannot be mimicked. It is the speaking to the heart of the thing."

CHAPTER VI.

TRANSCENDENTALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM.

DURING the years from 1834 to 1840 the so-called Transcendental movement was making steady progress in New England, and particularly around Boston. Dr. Channing was one of its originators; and so, less directly, were Coleridge, Carlyle, and the Germans whom these two chiefly made known to the English-speaking race. Bronson Alcott was a Transcendentalist by birth, and even, perhaps, in that pre-existent state to which he referred our origin; and he early manifested a relish for speculation such as the Transcendentalists of Europe and the earlier mystics had encouraged. In Philadelphia, from 1830 to 1834, he read a great many metaphysical and mystical books, and speculated deeply on the nature of the soul and on human perfectibility; so that he was better prepared than most men, upon his return to New England, to join in the nascent movement, already strengthened by the return of Emerson from his visit to Carlyle; by

the activity of Frederick Henry Hedge, who had been educated at a German university, and knew the speculative philosophy of Germany at first hand; and by the enthusiastic adhesion of William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, and Margaret Fuller. These two younger men (J. F. Clarke and W. H. Channing) were concerned in editing the "Western Messenger" at Cincinnati and Louisville,—a monthly magazine in which Emerson first printed some of his poems, and for which Clarke wrote notices of Miss Peabody's book as well as of Emerson's first prose work, "Nature." These early Transcendentalists were also intimate friends. Margaret Fuller and Mr. Hedge became closely acquainted at Cambridge, where both of them resided until 1833, except the time spent by Mr. Hedge in Germany; and where James Freeman Clarke joined them in their enthusiasm for German literature in 1832. Emerson made the acquaintance both of Bronson Alcott and of Margaret Fuller in 1835. He had met Alcott in Boston several times before recording in his journal (Oct. 21, 1835) the impression made by his first visit to Concord, and by Emerson's late visit to the Temple School (June 16, 1836). Here are the two entries:—

1835. "Last Saturday night came hither Mr. Alcott, and spent the Sabbath,—a wise man, simple,

superior to display, and drops the best things as quietly as the least. Every man, he said, is a revelation, and ought to write his record, but few with the pen. His book is his School, in which he writes all his thoughts. The spiritual world should meet men everywhere, and so the government should teach. Our life flows out into amusements. Need of a drama here; how well to lash the American follies. Every man is a system, an institution; autobiography the best book. He thinks Jesus a pure deist, and says all children are deists. Charles Emerson remarks upon the nimbleness and buoyancy which the conversation of a spiritualist awakens; the world begins to dislimn.

1836. "Yesterday I went to Mr. Alcott's school, and heard a conversation upon the Gospel of John. I thought the experiment of engaging young children upon questions of taste and truth successful. A few striking things were said by them. I felt strongly, as I watched the gradual dawn of a thought upon the minds of all, that to Truth is no age or season. It appears or it does not appear; and when the child perceives it he is no more a child. Age, sex, are nothing; we are all alike before the great Whole. Little Josiah Quincy, now six years six months old, is a child having something wonderful and divine in him. He is a youthful prophet."

Again, in 1838 we find this record in Emerson's journal, — the "wise woman" was doubtless Margaret Fuller, who had by that time become

an intimate friend, as Alcott had been from the first:—

“Alcott has the great merit of being a believer in the soul. I think he has more faith in the Ideal than any man I have known. Hence his welcome influence. A wise woman said to me that he has few thoughts, too few; she could count them all. Well, books, conversation, discipline, will give him more. But what were many thoughts if he had not this distinguishing faith, which is a palpable proclamation, out of the deeps of Nature, that God yet is? With many thoughts, and without this, he would be only one more of a countless throng of lettered men; but now you cannot spare the fortification that he is.”

In 1837, when the Philistines were in full cry against the Temple School and its heretical teacher, Alcott was spoken of generally as the leader of the Transcendentalists,—a distinction soon afterward given to Emerson, chiefly in consequence of his Divinity School address of 1838, which stirred the calm lake of Unitarian theology to its very bottom. These two friends, of whom Alcott was by more than three years the elder, but who were themselves older than most of their associates, joined in many activities of that period. They were originators of the somewhat famous Transcendental Club, which met under various names from 1836 to 1850. This small

gathering of friends was first called the "Symposium," and met for the first time on the 19th of September, 1836, at the house of George Ripley, then a minister in Boston. In October, it met again at Mr. Alcott's house (26 Front Street), when there were present Emerson,¹ George Ripley, F. H. Hedge, Orestes A. Brownson, J. F. Clarke, and C. A. Bartol, besides the host. At each meeting some topic was usually debated; at Mr. Alcott's house it was this: "American Genius,—the causes which hinder its growth." Besides the regular members, others having some affinity with the movement were occasionally present,—for example, Mr. Brownson, Dr. Charles Follen (a learned German, exiled from his country for political opinions), Mr. Alcott's friend William Russell, and his brother-in-law, S. J. May; and now and then Dr. Channing, the historian George Bancroft (then Collector of the Port of Boston under President Van Buren), the artist-poet Christopher Cranch, the artist-banker S. G. Ward, the sculptor Clevenger; and those two

¹ Mr. Alcott has written in his "Autobiographical Collections" the names of sixteen members of this club; but not all were present at these two early meetings. The names are Convers Francis, R. W. Emerson, Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, F. H. Hedge, J. F. Clarke, C. A. Bartol, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth P. Peabody, Theodore Parker, William H. Channing, John S. Dwight, Jones Very, Henry D. Thoreau, Robert Bartlett, and Caleb Stetson.

learned and gentle ladies of Concord, Mrs. Samuel Ripley (then living at Waltham) and Miss Elizabeth Hoar, who was engaged to marry Charles Emerson, youngest brother of the Concord poet. It may be, also, that Ellery Channing, a nephew of Dr. Channing, and brother-in-law of Margaret Fuller, occasionally fitted through these gatherings,—for he was the friend of almost all the persons named.

Concerning his first visit to Emerson at Concord (Oct. 18, 1835), Mr. Alcott made this entry in his diary:—

“I go to Concord this afternoon to see Rev. Mr. Emerson, one of the purest spiritualists of the day, himself a revelation of the divine spirit, an ‘uttering word.’ I drove to Concord with Mr. George P. Bradford, and we reached the residence of Mr. Emerson after a drive of three hours. The evening was passed in conversation. On Sunday various interesting topics, of an intellectual and spiritual character, were resumed. On most subjects there was striking conformity of taste and opinion. We had much talk on the character and life of Christ, on which there was some disparity of idea,—more the effect, as I deem, of difference of association than of thought. Mr. Emerson’s fine literary taste is sometimes in the way of his clear and hearty acceptance of the Spiritual. Carlyle is his ideal; his portrait I saw for the first time. I have not found a man in whose whole mind I felt more sympathy; with

Mrs. Emerson I was also much pleased. These two persons have and represent a new idea of life. I have found a man who, with all his taste for Grecian literature and philosophy, can apprehend something spiritual in Christianity. To him it is not 'altogether foolishness,' for he has the sense of the Human and love and faith of the pure and the perfect in Universal Man. With his brother, Mr. Charles Emerson, I had some interesting conversation; he has much of his brother's spirit. They are both scholarlike in their views, and yet the man is not lost in the scholar. To have a few such friends is the joy and comfort of life. In communion with such the spirit finds itself, and, for the brief time of their presence, forgets its independent life, being lost in the common being of Humanity."

Emerson was at this time preparing for the press his first volume,—a system of spiritual philosophy, published in 1836 under the title of "Nature." He consulted Alcott occasionally in regard to its chapters; and it was the belief of some, and of Alcott himself, that those portions of the last chapter which are ascribed to "a certain poet," were derived in part from his conversations with the elder mystic. Certainly these passages much more resemble the thought and dialect of Alcott than of Emerson in after years:

"Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return

to Paradise. Man is the dwarf of himself. Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled Nature with his overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon; from man, the sun; from woman, the moon. The laws of his mind, the periods of his actions, externized themselves into day and night, into the year and the seasons. But, having made for himself this huge shell, the waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets. He sees that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fitted him; now it corresponds to him from far and on high. He adores timidly his own work. Now is man the follower of the sun, and woman the follower of the moon. Yet sometimes he starts in his slumber, and wonders at himself and his house, and muses strangely at the resemblance betwixt him and it. He perceives that if his law is still paramount, if he still have elemental power, 'if his word is sterling yet in Nature,' it is not conscious power; it is not inferior, but superior, to his will. It is Instinct."

When "Nature" came out, in the summer of 1836, Rev. W. H. Furness, though a schoolmate and life-long friend of Emerson, seems to have received his first sight of it from Alcott,¹ to whom

¹ Emerson wrote to Furness, October, 1837: "I shall always love you for loving Alcott. He is a great man; the god with the herdsmen of Admetus. I cannot think you know him now, when I remember how long he has been here, for he grows every month. His conversation is sublime; yet when I see how he is under-estimated by cultivated people, I fancy none but I have heard him talk."

he wrote an enthusiastic letter about it September 17. The remark made by him concerning his friend Hedge, and his mention of Mrs. Fanny Kemble Butler, who was then one of his hearers in Philadelphia, are equally worthy of notice:—

“How I thank you for yours just received! I was longing for a vent for the feeling awakened by ‘Nature,’ which Mrs. Morrison left with me last evening, and which is ringing in my soul like the voice of an angel. I feel I am poor, dumb, and blind; but my nature vibrates and quakes at the approach of I know not what. I seem to myself as a flower must look to a deaf and dumb child, seeing it through a closed window, in a rough wind, dipping up and down, but no hand moving it. It is a beautiful book. Except for the mention of Sham, and some other modern things, I should be sure it was written in Sir Thomas Browne’s time. It is a poem. There is but little of it, I fear, into which I have fully entered. But I recognize a view I have had, originally suggested by your saying, as you used to do, ‘That whether the facts of the New Testament were true or not, — were they pictures, they are still interesting and enlightening to you.’ I never knew how to meet this observation of yours. I have since thought, and Emerson expresses the true idea, that facts are infinitely more valuable than pictures, because facts are God’s fables, God’s pictures, and pictures are man’s pictures. . . . If you do have your meetings, I trust Hedge will see fit to work. I am afraid he dreams too

much. And yet he had better dream than work in the spirit of our times. I have tried to urge Mrs. Butler to attempt a work on Shakspeare, — that is her mission. She has taught me a great deal, — I mean in comparison with what I knew before. Her inward vision is clear and open."

Margaret Fuller was for a time an assistant in the Temple School, and Mrs. Hawthorne, as already mentioned, occasionally reported the remarks of the children. The former, in August, 1836, had written to Mr. Alcott from Groton, where she then resided, a letter suggested by something said by him at Concord, where they had met just before. She is in doubt whether to join his enterprise or not, and thus writes:

GROTON, August 23, 1836.

DEAR SIR, — I am not quite sure that I understood your last words at Mr. Emerson's. As I understood, you had applied to some other person to assist you in your school, before you thought of me; and would write to me after receiving an answer from that person. A letter since received from Miss Peabody leads me to think that you may, on your side, be expecting to hear from me; and as I find it necessary to come to some decision about my employment for the winter, I think it best to write to you at any rate. Will you have the kindness to answer this letter as soon as possible, informing me whether you are desirous I should take

Miss Peabody's place; whether, if I take it, you expect me to reside in your family as she did, and whether anything would be expected from me beyond the instruction in Latin or other languages which you mentioned to me,—with any other circumstances which you may think proper for me to know, in order to reach my decision. My acquaintance with your views and character is not sufficiently thorough to give me a confidence that I could satisfy you. But I think, as far as I understand your plan, I might carry it into execution as successfully as most persons; and I should like to become more conversant with your method of teaching. It would be but an experiment on both sides, for, as I have never yet been subordinate to any one, I cannot tell how I should please or be pleased. But your proposal has attracted me more than any other which has as yet been made to me. If I am right in my first supposition, and you did not make any direct proposal, but only spoke of the possibility of doing so, do not let this letter embarrass you. You have only to say how it was.

Some months later (May, 1837), having had some of Mr. Alcott's diaries to read while in Groton, she returned them with a note, saying: "I thank you for the look you have esteemed me worthy to take into your views and feelings,—and I trust you will never have reason to repent your confidence,—as I shall always rejoice in the intercourse which has been permitted me with so fair

a soul. You will find in the first blank leaf of your journal a little poem which expresses some part of what has been suggested to me by the record of your life. You will, I hope, pardon the liberty I have taken in writing it there, as the leaf can easily be taken out, if the thoughts there inscribed do not please you." Of course the courteous diarist did not refuse the tribute thus offered by this sibylline person,¹ who complimented in such original terms.

Miss Fuller's connection with the Temple School was rather a slight one; but as the new movement went on, she became more interested in Mr. Alcott, who also fathomed her character profoundly, and has sketched it in one of the sonnets:

"For even in those refrainings of her voice,
There struggled up a wailing undertone
That spoke her victim of the Sisters' choice, —
Charming all others, dwelling still alone;
Survives for us thy sex's valiant plea,
And the great heart that loved the brave and free."

Of Theodore Parker, another and one of the most powerful at the Symposium, Alcott has left a prose sketch as well as a sonnet:—

"Parker was a formidable person, loaded with love and dread, and as good a friend as enemy. I liked

¹ Emerson mentions that when Alcott went to England in 1842, he wished to carry miniatures of Margaret, of Miss Peabody, and of Emerson himself.

him for his work in the world, but had little success with him in conversation, for he seemed to be talking from memory more than inspiration, and I thought him incurious about persons, — looking to books and actual contact with things for the knowledge he sought. Too much work killed him ; his appetite was so egregious for information and for doing, that he had lived several lives, and died older at fifty than any man of his time is likely to become. He was constitutionally polemic, excellent in controversy and debate, and knew very well what to do with his antagonists ; but magnanimous, and strove, not for victory, but for truth. The North had discovered his formidable abilities, and his friends had thought of extending his influence over the country ; for as Calhoun was dead, and Parker had written Webster's epitaph, it was hoped he might be set upon Congress, and the Compromises in due time. Sensible to the edge of terror, he spoke straightforward and to the times, with a homely eloquence. Indeed, there were audacities in the man which, had they not been tempered and guarded by his natural piety and strength of principle, were dangerous to any opponent. He was a soldier of righteousness. His eloquence was of the cumulative class, — held under the strict method of a comprehensive common-sense. He had great power over the multitude by the extent of his information, and his methodical array of fact and argument. German in his constitution and way of life, — a book-collector with a broad way of thinking and doing, — he was everywhere esteemed as a defender of liberty in

its broadest interpretation, and against the cramping influences of creeds and institutions. He had much of the Teutonic pluck also; was hearty, honest, and good for service; every way genuine and conscientious. But I think I felt him less than most of my contemporaries of active powers and thoughtful habits. Yet I find he has been much to many excellent persons all over the land; and had he lived might perhaps have founded a more sane and sensible school of religionists. Perhaps he will now."

Concerning Alcott himself, Emerson wrote in 1842 as follows:—

"I saw him for the first time in Boston in 1835. He is a man of ideas, a man of faith. Expect his contempt for all usages which are simply such. His social nature and his taste for beauty and magnificence will betray him into tolerance and indulgence even, to men and to magnificence; but a statute or a practice he is condemned to measure by its essential wisdom or folly. He delights in speculation, — in nothing so much, — and is well endowed and weaponed for that work, with a copious, accurate, and elegant vocabulary, — I may say poetic; so that I know no man who speaks such good English as he, and is so inventive withal. He speaks truth truly; the expression is adequate. Yet he knows only this one language. He hardly needs an antagonist, — he needs only an intelligent ear. When he is greeted by loving, intelligent persons, his discourse soars to a wonderful height; so regular, so

lucid, so playful, so new and disdainful of all boundaries of tradition and experience, that the hearers seem no longer to have bodies or material gravity, but almost they can mount into the air at pleasure, or leap at one bound out of this poor solar system. I say this of his speech, exclusively, for when he attempts to write he loses, to my judgment, all his power. . . . He has, moreover, the greatest possession both of mind and temper in his discourse, so that the mastery and moderation and foresight and yet felicity with which he unfolds his thought are not to be surpassed. This is of importance to such a broacher of novelties as he is, and to one baited, as he is very apt to be, by sticklers for old books or old institutions. He takes such delight in the exercise of this faculty that he will willingly talk the whole of a day, and most part of the night, and then again to-morrow, for days successively; and if I, who am impatient of much speaking, draw him out to walk in the woods or fields, he will stop at the first fence, and very soon propose either to sit down or to return. He seems to think society exists for this function, and that all literature is good or bad as it approaches colloquy, which is its perfection. Poems and histories may be good, but only as adumbrations of this; and the only true manner of writing the literature of a nation would be to convene the best heads in the community, set them talking, and then introduce stenographers to record what they say. He so swiftly plants himself on the moral sentiment, in any conversation, that no man will ever get any advan-

tage of him, unless he be a saint, as Jones Very was. Every one else Alcott will put in the wrong. It must be conceded that it is speculation which he loves, and not action. Therefore he dissatisfies everybody, and disgusts many. When the conversation is ended, all is over. He lives to-morrow as he lived to-day, for further discourse, — not to begin, as he seemed pledged to do, a new celestial life."

Here, again, are some of the many passages in Alcott's diary concerning Emerson:—

February, 1837. "Mr. Emerson gave his closing lecture at Masonic Temple on Friday. This course has embraced subjects of great importance; here is an enumeration: Idea of history, art, science, literature, politics, religion, society, trades and professions, manners, ethics, the present age. This is the first attempt in Boston to give instruction on so wide a plan and on such great subjects. The success of the lectures has been satisfactory. He has had a choice and fair audience, and has dropped many a bold and free thought that will find acceptance among us at last. Much of what he has said will not be apprehended; the views of the lecturer will be carped at by some; others will delight in his dress and manners; a few will find life and significance in his doctrines. Emerson's influence will not soon be felt on the age. Its diffusion will be subtle and slow. It will act on the few simple natures which custom and convention have spared us, and these will circulate it in fit time. Many will be pleased by his

elegance of manner and grace of diction, and through these will be led to the contemplation of the divine form of beauty that he delights in. Curiosity will be excited to learn the secret of his agency, and ere the superficial and pedantic are aware, he will steal upon them unperceived. His genius must out; it must assert its claims, and these shall in due time be admitted. Thus shall the genius of Emerson chase away in time the small and arrogant intellects that now venture to stand between humanity and his orb. . . . I think his conversation equal, or superior, to his written words; no man among us whose familiarity with high and divine subjects strikes me as does his in conversation, and whose range of illustration is so wide, to say nothing of the exceeding fitness of his images and the beauty of his terms. In this respect he is far beyond Dr. Channing, who never converses, but holds monologues in your presence on the subjects concerning which you address him. Dr. Channing never responds to your sentiment. He talks and stops. You reply to him. He opens where he left off, and pursues the subject as if you were not present, except as he addresses you."

Such were some of the Transcendentalists. But what was their doctrine? Several persons have attempted to state it, with more or less success,—the fact being that they scarcely had a common doctrine, though moved by a common spirit. As a class they were best described by Emerson, their

great leader, who said of them in 1840: "They have, in secret or in public, paid their vows to truth and freedom; they love reality too well to care for names, and live by a Faith too earnest and profound to suffer them to doubt the eternity of its object, or to shake themselves free from its authority. Under the fictions and customs which occupied others, these have explored the Necessary, the Plain, the True, the Human, and so gained a vantage-ground which commands the history of the past and the present." Emerson then went on to say that any one might see in New England the progress of a revolution; and he added:—

"Those who share in it have no external organization, no badge, no creed, no name. They do not vote, or print, or even meet together. They do not know each other's faces or names. They are united only in a common love of truth, and love of its work. They are of all conditions and constitutions. Of these acolytes, if some are happily born and well-bred, many are no doubt ill-dressed, ill-placed, ill-made, with as many scars of hereditary vice as other men. Without pomp, without trumpet, in lonely and obscure places, in solitude, in servitude, in compunctions and privations, trudging beside the team in the dusty road, or drudging a hireling in other men's cornfields, schoolmasters who teach a few children rudiments for a pittance, ministers of small parishes of the obscurer sects, lone women in dependent condition, matrons and young maidens, rich

and poor, beautiful and hard-favored, without concert or proclamation of any kind, they have silently given in their several adherence to a new hope, and in all companies do signify a greater trust in the nature and resources of man than the laws or the popular opinions will well allow.

“This spirit of the time is felt by every individual with some difference, — to each one casting its light upon the objects nearest to his temper and habits of thought: to one, coming in the shape of special reforms in the State; to another, in modifications of the various callings of men, and the customs of business; to a third, opening a new scope for literature and art; to a fourth, in philosophical insight; to a fifth, in the vast solitudes of prayer. It is in every form a protest against usage, and a search for principles. In all its movements it is peaceable, and in the very lowest marked with a triumphant success. Of course, it rouses the opposition of all which it judges and condemns; but it is too confident in its tone to comprehend an objection, and so builds no outworks for possible defence against contingent enemies. It has the step of Fate, and goes on existing like an oak or a river, because it must.”

Three years before this striking passage was written, Alcott, in his diary for April, 1837, written in the midst of the slander and petty persecution of which he was then the victim, thus sets forth, in language intelligible to those

of spiritual discernment, his theory of human life:—

“I have been (as is ever the habit of my mind) striving to apprehend the real in the seeming, to strip ideas of their adventitious phrases, and behold them in their order and powers. I have sought to penetrate the showy terrestrial to find the heavenly things; I have tried to translate into ideas the language and images of spirit, and thus to read God in his works. The outward I have seen as the visage and type of the inward. Ever doth this same nature double its divine form, and stand forth—now before the inner, now before the outer sense of man—at once substance and form, image and idea, so that God shall never slip wholly from the consciousness of the soul. Faith apprehends his agency, even in the meanest and most seemingly trivial act, — wherever organ or matter undergo change of function or mode of form, — Spirit being all in all. Amidst all tumults and discomfitures, all errors and evils, Faith discerns the subtle bond that marries opposite natures, clinging to that which holds all in harmonious union. It unites opposites; it demolishes opposing forces. It melts all solid and obstinate matters. It makes fluid the material universe. It hopes even in despair, believes in the midst of doubts, apprehends stability and order even in confusion and anarchy, and, while all without is perturbed and wasting, it possesses itself in quietude and repose within. It abides in the unswerving, is mighty in the omnipotent,

and enduring in the eternal. The soul quickened by its agency, though borne on the waves of the mutable and beset by the winds of error and the storms of evil, shall ride securely under this directing hand to the real and the true. In the midst of change, it shall remain unchanged. For to such a faith is the divine order of God made known. All visible things are but manifestations of this order. Nature, with all its change, is but the activity of this power. It flows around and obeys the invisible, self-anchored spirit. Mutability, to such a vision, is as the eddy that spirit maketh around its own self-circling agency, revealing alike in the smallest ripple and the mightiest surges the power that stirreth at the centre.

‘ All sublunary things
Are but the rapids of vicissitude.’ ”

It was passages like this, and conversations more felicitous and profound, which led Emerson in May, 1837, to write to Alcott, urging him to give up attempts to convert the world by school-teaching and practical efforts of every kind,¹ and to become an author. These were Emerson’s words: —

“ In the few moments’ broken conversation I had with you a fortnight ago, it seems to me you did not

¹ Alcott found, after all his efforts on that most incorrigible of all materials, man, a real comfort in working on that most corrigible and docile of all pupils, Nature. — EMERSON, in 1847.

acquiesce at all in what is always my golden view for you, as for all men to whom God has given 'the vision and the faculty divine;' namely, that one day you would leave the impracticable world to wag its own way, and sit apart and write your oracles for its behoof! Write! let them hear or let them forbear; the written word abides until, slowly and unexpectedly and in widely sundered places, it has created its own church. And my love and confidence in that silent Muse is such, that, in circumstances in which I can easily conceive myself placed, I should prefer some manual or quite mechanical labor as a means of living, that should leave me a few sacred hours in the twenty-four, to any attempt to realize my idea in any existing forms called intellectual or spiritual; where, by defying every settled usage in society, I should be sure to sour my own temper."¹

¹ This confidence in Alcott's ability to write, here so warmly expressed, had been shaken before 1842, as we have seen; and it gradually changed, in Emerson's mind, to a feeling that his friend could write nothing that was worth printing: we find this criticism often expressed in the journal. To me (F. B. S.) Emerson used to say, "When he sits down to write, all his genius leaves him; he gives you the shells and throws away the kernel of his thought." Lowell, who had very likely heard Emerson say something like this, puts it in his own language into the "Fable for Critics," where he has given a very good sketch of Alcott in other respects: —

↓
"While he talks he is great, but goes out like a taper,
If you shut him up closely with pen, ink, and paper;
Yet his fingers itch for 'em from morning till night,

Three months before this (Feb. 27, 1837), Alcott had submitted to his Concord friend the manuscript of a book entitled "Psyche, or the Breath of Childhood," which was never published, although Emerson offered to carry it through the press himself, as he was then doing with Carlyle's books. A few sentences may be copied from this manuscript, whose motto is —

"Immortal is thy Father, babe,
And of thy kingdom there's no end."¹

And he thinks he does wrong if he don't always write;
In this, as in all things, a lamb among men,
He goes to sure death when he goes to the pen."

The truth, as usual, lay between the two extremes of Emerson's opinion. Alcott could seldom *write* well during his first sixty years, although he seldom failed to *speak* well. But the slow attrition of the outward world, wearing away his sharp poetic senses, at last brought him to skill in writing; for Emerson had observed acutely in 1843: "Alcott has been writing poetry, he says, all winter. I fear there is nothing for me in it. *His overpowering personality destroys all poetic faculty.*" Now, as age and experience toned down this personality, Alcott became capable of expressing in language truly poetic his long-cherished poetical insight; and of this fact the book of Sonnets, written between the ages of eighty and eighty-three, is a perfect witness. Even so we see near-sighted persons grow far-sighted, as age weakens the too great convergent power of the eye.

¹ These lines are from an early English poet, and were written at Christmas. But to Alcott Christmas came, not once a year, but every day that a child was born.

In November, 1837, Alcott says in the diary: "Emerson

“ Beside thee, O child ! I seek to fathom thy being, — but the notion of thee, floating in the depths of my consciousness, mockingly escapes apprehension. Older than thought, and more prescient, thou eludest my search, and I lose myself in thee, the while Time stretches backward into the periods whence it issued, and forward to its return. It dates not thy genesis, advent, nor departure ; thou still art, wast ever, and shalt remain, the horologe of time’s transit. Thy history the hours fail to chronicle. Thou art timeless, dateless. Before time was, and by reason of thy eternal existence, thou preservest celestial memories. The clock that chimes, the sun rising and setting, but give thy terrestrial chronology ; thou hast more faithful keepers of thy reckoning. Time’s dial is set by thee ; the orb of day wheels on his course to mark the history of thy career. Nature thou art not, but of thee Nature is the showing. Matter is thy shadow, as thou movest on thy behests. Experience runs back and is lost in thee, perpetuity shines through all thy lineaments. Thou art prophet at once and historian of God. And, O child ! thou remindest me of the dawn of mine own

offers to publish my ‘Psyche’ on his own responsibility, after he shall have brought Carlyle’s ‘French Revolution’ before the public. I shall be glad to put it to press under such auspices, free from any pecuniary risk. I cannot publish at my own expense, and publishers, in the present state of the public mind in this city, would hesitate as to the reception of my works. But for some friendly aid of this sort, they must lie at present in manuscript.”

being ; I behold returning ages in thee. Thou comest to me as an inhabitant of a country once mine own ; thy gentle manners are yet familiar to me, while still I seem strange and a sojourner here in changeful time. But thou knowest of no change ; thou deemest thyself still in thy Father's mansion, still an inmate of his household, clad still from his wardrobe, still fed from his board. Thou art at home, and shalt there abide while thou retainest the memory thereof, though yet a dweller in the tabernacle of clay ; shalt not feel pining absence thus exiled in flesh. This errand of thine in time, this commerce with matter, this dalliance with opportunities, — where seeming is but the shadow of being, — here thy desire yearns for what it hath lost ; while Memory and Hope are the Janus-faced surveyors of thy cycle of eternal years."

Commenting on this and other passages in "Psyche" (the manuscript was not yet completed, and portions of it were in Emerson's hands a year later), the Concord critic writes to the glowing author (Feb. 27, 1836):—

I am afraid you think me very remiss in failing to send back your MSS. in so many weeks. But truly they were not easily despatched, and my readings have been much interrupted. I have now read all the pages twice, some of them many times, and have to return you hearty thanks for the privilege and the pleasure. As you were pleased to challenge my critical powers

in this reading, I will endeavor to give you the results both in general and in particular. I think the book original, and vital in all its parts, manifestly the production of a man in earnest, and written to convince. I think it possesses in certain passages the rare power to awaken the highest faculties, — to waken the apprehension of the Absolute.¹ I think it discovers, throughout, that delicate discrimination of the proprieties and felicities of expression which is an essential organ of literary genius. It is almost uniformly elegant, and contains many beautiful and some splendid passages.

These seem to me prominent merits of the book. Let me now tell you what, with some diffidence, I deem its defects. Its fault arises out of the subtlety and extent of its subject. I think it grapples with an Idea which it does not subdue and present in just method before us. It seems to me much a book of one idea, — somewhat deficient in variety of thought and illustration, and even sometimes pedantic from the willingness (shall I say) with which everything is forced into the author's favorite aspect of expression. The book has a strong mannerism. Much of this might be re-

¹ This particular expression, so highly descriptive, of Alcott's mind, was used twenty years afterward by Emerson in the article written by him concerning Alcott, in what was then called the "New American Cyclopædia," edited by their mutual friend, George Ripley, and published by Appleton. It is odd that this article, the best ever written concerning Alcott, was not reproduced in the new edition of the Cyclopædia, begun in 1873, where a much inferior biography was substituted.

moved, and I think the fastidious eye relieved, by striking out the antiquated form of the verb, as "revealeth," "seeth," etc., and writing *reveals*, *sees* — and by a more frugal use of certain words, such as "mirror forth," "image," "shape forth," and others of that character. But its capital fault, I think, is the want of compression,—a fault almost unavoidable in treating such a subject, which, not being easily apprehensible by the human faculties, we are tempted to linger round the Idea, in the hope that what cannot be sharply stated in a few words may yet chance to be suggested by many. If you should publish this work as it is, it would, I doubt not, find many readers, and discerning persons would discover that it contained fine gold. But it would please me still better if you would do for it what I am now doing with some papers of my own ("Nature"); that is, to go through the work — chiefly by the memory — and take the *things* out, leaving the rest. That extract will be precious as the Sibyl's remaining scrolls. For example, I can tell you some of the parts which I would save as brands from the burning. The Chapter XI., first of all; the Chapter XXXIX., which yet I think would be much improved by condensations, — Nursery Maids, page 46, Immortality, City Influences, Culture of the Imagination, Philosophy; Chapter XIII., Lust, Punishment, Dreams, Loneliness, Affluence of Spirit, Bivision; Chapter XXXIII., Signs of Spirit, End of Matter; Chapter XXXVI., Holidays; Chapter XVIII., Counsels.

I have read the whole book with great interest, and

I think the power of reflection and of expression exhibited is too great to leave you any liberty in our time and country, wherein is such a dearth of both, to neglect or conceal your gifts. I may say what Burke said of Howard, "Your plan is original, and as full of genius as of humanity." So do not let it sleep or stop a day. Imagining I saw many verbal inaccuracies,¹ I ran over the first hundred pages this morning with a pen in my hand, and enclose my sheet of spoils.

With great respect and affection,

R. WALDO EMERSON.

It may now be interesting to see the impression Emerson made upon Alcott by his spoken and

¹ This courteous expression was used to call attention to Alcott's faulty dialect, and particularly his use of archaic words. The whole sheet might well be printed, as a lesson in rhetoric to thoughtful but ambitious writers. One expression pointed out, with the unerring precision of Emerson's critical finger, the chief defect of Alcott's style at that time, — which was also the glaring defect of much that was written by the "apostles of the newness" from 1835 to 1850. He said, "Your style often reminds me of the vulgar saying, 'All stir and no go.'" But in 1855 Emerson wrote: "I have been struck with the late superiority Alcott showed. His interlocutors were all better than he; he seemed childish and helpless, not apprehending or answering their remarks aright, and they masters of their weapons. But by and by, when he got upon a thought, like an Indian seizing by the mane and mounting a wild horse of the desert, he overrode them all, and showed such mastery, and took up Time and Nature like a boy's marble in his hand, as to vindicate himself."

written words. After receiving the letter in which his Concord friend spoke of the barking dogs and of the Boston mob, Alcott entered in his diary this comment:¹—

“It is much to have the vision of the seeing eye. Did most men possess this, the useful hand would be empowered with new dexterity also. Emerson sees me, knows me, and, more than all others, helps me, — not by noisy praise, not by low appeals to interest and passion, but by turning the eye of others to my stand in reason and the nature of things. Only men of like vision can apprehend and counsel each other. A man whose purpose and act demand but a day or an hour for their completion can do little by way of advising him whose purposes require years for their fulfilment. Only Emerson, of this age, knows me, of all that I have found. Well, every one does not find *one* man, *one very man, through and through*. Many are they who live and die alone, known only to their survivors of an after-century.”

¹ For Emerson's letter, see *ante*, p. 216. Compare also the strange similarity of Carlyle's reply to Emerson in 1841, when he received the first volume of "Essays": "It is once more the voice of a man. Ah, me! I feel as if in the wide world there were still but this one voice that responded intelligently to my own; as if the rest were all hearsays, melodious or unmelodious echoes; as if this alone were true and alive." Yet Carlyle and Alcott were repugnant to each other, — Emerson was the middle term connecting them.

Concerning Emerson's style in his early lectures, there are other passages in the diary for 1837:—

“Emerson always kindles a sublime sentiment when, in those deep and oracular undertones which he knows well how to use, he speaks of the divine entities. A supernatural awe creeps over one at the severe pathos of his manner and his unaffected earnestness. After long intervals of remark, now bordering almost on coarseness, and the picture of vulgar life that he draws with a Shakspearian boldness, respecting farmers, tradesmen, beasts, vermin, the rabid mob, the courtesan, the under as well as the upper vulgar, — and now sliding into all that is beautiful, refined, elegant, — he bursts upon the hearer in strains of thought and charms of diction that overpower the soul. The burlesque in a twinkling is transformed into the serious; the sketchy outline becomes a sublime idea. His is the poet's, not the logician's power; he states, pictures, sketches, but does not reason. Nature shines serenely through the calm depths of his soul, and leaves upon its surface the images of all her works. He is always impressive when he comes to the elucidation of great and eminent natures. These are realities, and have their root and life in the Spirit, of which man and nature are the visible types. Observe his style; it is full of genuine phrases from the Saxon. He loves the simple, the natural; the thing is sharply presented, yet graced by beauty and elegance. Our language is a fit organ, as

used by him; and we hear classic English once more from northern lips. Shakspeare, Sidney, Browne, speak again to us, and we recognize our affinity with the fathers of English diction. Emerson is the only instance of original style among Americans. Who writes like him? Who can? None of his imitators, surely. The day shall come when this man's genius shall shine beyond the circle of his own city and nation. Emerson's is destined to be the high literary name of this age."

Alcott, like Emerson, was constantly searching for men,—men who could confront their age, and do something to change its sordid current of thought and action. In May, 1837, he visited that transient Boanerges of social reform in Boston, Orestes Brownson, who had come down from the hills of Vermont preaching universal salvation and political socialism, and who in 1836 had organized in Boston a "Society for Christian Union and Progress." Lowell placed him after Emerson, Carlyle, and Alcott, in his "Fable for Critics" (by 1848 Brownson had become a Catholic), and thus opens his description:—

"Close behind him is Brownson, his mouth very full,
With attempting to gulp a Gregorian bull;
Who contrives, spite of that, to pour out, as he goes,
A stream of transparent and forcible prose;

He shifts quite about, then proceeds to expound
That 't is merely the earth, not himself, that turns round,
And wishes it clearly impressed on your mind
That the weather-cock rules, and not follows, the wind."

In the diary Mr. Alcott compares him with Dr. James Walker, afterward a Professor and President of Harvard College, saying:—

"I passed an evening during this week with Mr. Brownson, and with him called on and spent an hour with Mr. Walker, editor of the 'Christian Examiner.' Both are friends of human culture, yet with neither do I find that hearty sympathy which I desire. They are men of fair talents and generous purposes, yet destitute of deep and fervid enthusiasm, and of that kindling genius which ennobles our nature and fits it to the happiest actions. My intimacy with them is not unmixed with the doubts and suspicious associations that attend pride of intellect. They make themselves merry, more than befits my taste, with the divine in our nature; they espouse the cause of the vulgar many rather than that of the noble few. Both chop logic, both are men of understanding, neither apprehends the being of poet and seer; the high works of poetic genius, the marvels of holiness, are beyond their grasp, although both are good and useful men. They eschew belief in other than bare and barren reasoning, which is the life of the Eclectic school, and refuse credence to all else. There are a few minds whose views do not in all respects coincide with the doctrines of the Eclectic

school. These persons have been named after the German Transcendentalists, — a name among us at this time indicative of all that is fanciful, wild, and undevout. These, therefore, are assumed as wanting in good sense, unworthy the name of philosophers, and without the graces of genuine piety; they are called Pantheists. Emerson, Hedge, Furness, and myself are classed in this number. Thus there are now the Eclectic, the Transcendental, the Rational doctrines, each with their representatives; and in each Spiritualism reveals itself as the antagonist of the sensual philosophy which has so long had the ascendancy. The tendency of the age is obviously towards spiritualism; and though our language, literature, science, art, and institutions are all tinged with the material element, yet the spiritual is destined to prevail. Materialism is passing away before its life. . . . Rev. Convers Francis¹ of Watertown called on me this week. I became acquainted with him at our Symposium in 1836; he is one of our most worthy and sensible ministers; his learning is extensive, few men are more erudite or more amply furnished. He hoped the time would come when

¹ This was the brother of Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, and the elder friend and early guide of Theodore Parker in his wide-ranging studies of theology, philosophy, and history. He continued throughout his life a Transcendentalist, and a friend of all practicable reforms; but his courage was not always equal to his insight; and Parker felt that his old friend did not quite stand by him, when the day of persecution came.

I should have classes of young persons whose characters I might form by conversation and lectures. I value his friendship, and his apprehension of my purpose is of great importance. . . . I took a short walk with George Ripley this week (May, 1837), and am pleased to find him so cordial. Of the ministers in Boston, he is perhaps the most in favor of fair and free discussion. He tells me that his brethren have been considering freedom of discussion at their weekly meetings lately, and that they have been led to it by the manner in which my book has been spoken of in the public prints. I learn that these ministers, with a few exceptions, regard me as an interloper in the theological fold, and deem this a fit occasion to make their sentiments known. They do not countenance my speculations, nor look with a friendly eye on my enterprise. Besides this, the teachers of public schools in Boston, owing to the freedom of remark in which I indulge on the present state of education, owe me no good will. Hence a favorable moment has come for a movement against me.¹ . . . Dr. Alcott, my cousin, has confidence in my

¹ It was these same Boston schoolmasters, not without aid from ministers, who gave Horace Mann so much trouble seven or eight years later, and were by him demolished in a sarcastic and unanswerable pamphlet. At this time (1837) Mann was just beginning his remarkable labors as a reformer of common schools; but Alcott had preceded him by more than ten years, in the dissemination of ideas on the same subject. They were not yet acquainted, I believe; and when they became so, were not quite sympathetic.

intentions, approves my methods generally, but distrusts the principles that guide me. He is afraid of my theology, and looks with some alarm upon my supposed philosophy. In this he is not alone. Trinitarians know not what to make of me; Unitarians distrust me; unbelievers in Spirit cannot, of course, countenance me. Thus I am alone, both in the theological and the philosophical world. A few of the free and simple-minded, of no name or sect, speak in my favor; while the practical and sensible of all parties find much in my theory or practice to commend. . . . I had pleasant conversation with Mr. Hedge, both at the Symposium and at one other interview, Anniversary Week. I found more agreement with him than I had supposed. He misapprehended me somewhat on education. He inclines more to scholastic instruction; favors more the ancient doctrines of Aristotle than of Socrates or Plato. But his mind is of a fine order; of the younger clergy he is one of the most gifted. Emerson and Hedge promise more than others amongst us; with Furness, Brownson, and Ripley, they furnish the best talent in the liberal church."

At this time (1837-1838) Mr. Alcott became more intimate with Mr. Garrison, and took a stronger interest in his agitation to abolish slavery. He records interviews with him in the diary, and in one place he mentions the first appearance of a woman speaking on the antislavery platform in Massachusetts — Miss Angelina Grimke of South

Carolina, who in 1837 visited Boston and spoke eloquently on a subject very near her heart,—being herself the daughter, sister, and aunt of slaveholders, and in after years the aunt and protector of slaves who traced their blood to her brothers. Mr. Alcott says of her:—

“I heard Miss Angelina Grimke speak on the abolition of slavery,—a graceful and eloquent speaker, and a well-considered discourse. She realized my conception of a woman,—intellectual force of a high order, graceful speech, elegant manners, beautiful person, tasteful dress, and deep, divine piety. She is surely a noble creature. Her sister, somewhat older and of plainer features, is distinguished chiefly by her fervent piety and Christian spirit. Such forms of human character shed enduring glory; they give assurance of the power that woman is destined to wield when she shall be free, and cherished as she deserves. Angelina! fit name for the sex as God designed it.” (June, 1837.)

This was perhaps Mr. Alcott's first declaration in favor of the emancipation of women, although all his inclinations had been in that direction since he left his mother's knee. But during this season of Transcendental agitation he passed gradually through all the degrees of progress as a reformer. In 1835 he gave up animal food, and the next year invited the chief vegetarian, Dr. Sylvester Graham (for whom graham bread is

named) to lecture in his Temple School. He was present at many of the abolitionist gatherings,—for instance at the Lovejoy meeting in Faneuil Hall, in 1837, when Wendell Phillips made his first appearance as an antislavery orator. In 1840 he joined the Non-Resistants, and he met at Chardon Street Chapel with the “Friends of Universal Reform,” among whom were Garrison, Edmund Quincy, Theodore Parker, W. H. Channing, Mrs. Maria Chapman, Abby Kelly, Christopher Greene, and others of the same school of thought. He was, of course, friendly to the temperance reformation; there was no aspect of philanthropic effort that Transcendentalism did not favor. It needed this humane activity to balance the strong individualism and tendency to self-culture which, under the example and influence of Goethe, made one chief phase of the movement. A lady closely allied with its great apostles thus satirized this aspect of the new dispensation, of which she had opportunity to see much. The piece is an extravaganza, and so intended, — but not without points of application.

A TRANSCENDENTAL BIBLE.

I. THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

Never hint at a Providence, particular or universal. It is narrow to believe that the universal Being concerns itself with particular affairs, — egotistical to think it regulates your own.

Never speak of sin. It is of no consequence to the Being whether you are good or bad ; it is egotistical to consider it yourself. Who are you?

Never confess a fault. You should not have committed it, and who cares whether you are sorry?

Never speak of Happiness as a consequence of Holiness. Do you need any bribe to well-doing? Cannot you every hour practise Holiness for its own sake? Are you not ashamed to wish to be happy? It is egotistical, mean.

Never speak of the hope of Immortality. What do you know about it? It is egotistical to cling to it. Enough for the great to know that Being IS. He is quite content to drop into annihilation at the death of the body.

Never speak of affliction being sent, and that in kindness. That is an old wives' fable. What do we know about it, and what business is it of ours whether it is for our good or not?

II. DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOR.

Loathe and shun the sick. They are in bad taste, and may untune us for writing the poem scouting through our mind. Scorn the infirm of character, and omit no opportunity of insulting and exposing them. They ought not to be infirm, and should be punished by contempt and avoidance.

Despise the unintellectual, and make them feel that you do, by not noticing their remark or question, lest they presume to intrude on your conversation.

Abhor those who commit crimes, because they indicate stupidity and want of intellect, which is the one thing needful. Justify those who commit certain other crimes. Their commission is consistent with the possession of Intellect. We should not judge the intellectual as common men. It is mean enough, and weak, to put a great mind into the strait jacket of morality.

It is mean and weak to seek for sympathy; it is mean and weak to give it. Great souls are self-sustained, and stand ever erect, saying only to the prostrate sufferer, "Get up and stop your complaints."

Never wish to be loved. Who are you to expect that? Beside, the great never expect to be loved.

If any seek to believe that their sorrows are sent, and sent in love, do your best to dispel the silly egotistical illusion.

If you scorn Happiness (though you value a pleasant talk or walk, a tasteful garment, a comfortable dinner),

if you wish not for immortal consciousness (though you bear with impatience the loss of an hour of thought or study), if you care not for the loss of your soul (though you deprecate the loss of your house), if you care not how much you sin (though in pain at the commission of a slight indiscretion), if you ask not a wise Providence over the earth on which you live (although wishing a wise manager of the house in which you live), if you care not that a benign Divinity shapes your ends (though you seek a good tailor to shape your coat), if you scorn to believe your affliction cometh not from the dust (though bowed to the dust by it), — then, if there be such a thing as Duty, you have done your whole duty to your self-sustained, noble, impeccable, infallible self.

If you have refused all sympathy to the sorrowful, all pity and aid to the sick, all toleration to the infirm of character; if you have contemned the unintellectual, and loathed such sinners as have discovered want of intellect by their sin, — then are you a perfect specimen of humanity. Let us all aspire after this Perfection!

The new revelation, in truth, lent itself readily to the humorist for the amusement of himself or others. One of this sort, otherwise a very serious person, — Miss Mary Emerson, aunt of the Concord poet, and often of his household, — wrote thus to Mr. Alcott, soon after his first visit to Concord, where it seems she met him: —

CONCORD, Oct. 30, 1835.

DEAR SIR, — I tried in vain (ashamed as I may be of it) to find your lodgings yesterday. I wanted very much to get the outlines or sketches of your system, which you were good enough, I hope, to commit to paper. Or, I may more modestly say, the repetition of those views you gave me, — which, in truth, might need a more composed head than mine, — which was less composed than usual. While the form dazzled, — while the speaker inspired confidence, — the foundation of the — the — superstructure, gilded and golden — was in depths of — I will tell you plainly what, when I am furnished more with terms as well as principles, — after I have seen the account of your present instruction. No marvel that Age is at a loss to express itself about a system, theory, or whatever, which is proposed for Infancy. If you will have the kindness to send me a letter, including the conversation, and as much more as you can afford, I will, if you give leave, express myself more plainly, on a ground which now seems to give way to my literality and common-sense philosophy. It will gratify me if you will read a book which I left for you, at Front Street, 13. It is an antidote to your opinions, and is modern Unitarianism of a higher order. I travelled with it all the morning, hoping to find some one who would take it to you. And I know no one whom I wish to read it more than yourself.

Mr. Emerson came, to welcome me home; but he talked of nothing but the pleasure of seeing you. Af-

fectionate regards to Mrs. Alcott, and hearty wishes for your success.

I am respectfully yours,

M. M. EMERSON.

This was the lady who, admiring the brilliant wit of Talleyrand,—not unlike her own, except that hers was crowded with devout imaginations,—said with a sigh, “I fear he was not organized for a future state.” Her nephew, whom she trained and inspired, said of her: “When I read Dante the other day, and his paraphrases to signify with more adequateness Christ or Jehovah, whom do you think I was reminded of? Whom but Mary Emerson and her eloquent theology?” Again: “Her wit was so fertile, and only used to strike, that she never used it for display, any more than a wasp would parade his sting.” Twenty years and more after this thrust at Alcott’s theories, and when she was an octogenarian, I saw her rise up in her nephew’s house, (where she first met Alcott in 1835), and inveigh with sudden vehemence and success against what she thought the antinomian declarations of Henry James the elder, who was answering the reasoning of Alcott and Thoreau (there present) with not unwonted paradoxes. She esteemed Alcott for his piety, but spurned his philosophy; ad-

mired Thoreau for his genius, yet loved to tease him.¹

The first open outbreak of Transcendentalism

¹ Thoreau described this conversation thus in a letter: "I met Henry James the other night at Emerson's, at an Alcottian conversation, at which, however, Alcott did not talk much, being disturbed by James's opposition. The latter is a hearty man enough, with whom you can differ very satisfactorily, both on account of his doctrines and his good temper. He utters *quasi*-philanthropic dogmas in a metaphysic dress; but they are, for all practical purposes, very crude. He charges society with all the crime committed, and praises the criminal for committing it. But I think that all the remedies he suggests out of his head—for he goes no farther, hearty as he is—would leave us about where we are now. For, of course, it is not by a gift of turkeys on Thanksgiving Day that he proposes to convert the criminal, but by a true sympathy with each one,—with him, among the rest, who lyingly tells the world from the gallows that he has never been treated kindly by a single mortal since he was born. But it is not so easy a thing to sympathize with another, though you may have the best disposition to do it. There is Dobson over the hill. Have not you and I and all the world been trying to sympathize with him since he was born (as doubtless he with us), and yet we have got no further than to send him to the House of Correction once at least; and he, on the other hand, has sent us to another place several times. This is the real state of things as I understand it, at least so far as James's remedies. We are now, alas! exercising what charity we actually have, and new laws would not give us any more. But, perchance, we might make some improvements in the House of Correction. You and I are Dobson; what will James do for us?" The question is as new and fresh now as when Mary Emerson denounced James for his lax notions.

was the delivery by Emerson of his searching and eloquent address before the small graduating class of theological students at the Unitarian Divinity School of Harvard University in July, 1838. There had been controversies before, in which some of the same questions came up; but nothing that made the stir which this declaration of insight, opinion, and purpose instantly did. In November, 1835, Theodore Parker, just graduated from this same Cambridge school, wrote to a classmate: "What do the good people say about the article which Professor Andrews Norton published in the 'Advertiser' on Mr. George Ripley? The great Mr. Norton must set himself up for a dictator, I suppose; and if any man utters any opinion a little ultra, in his estimation, why, the dear *quondam* Professor must say, 'I do not think so,—and *I* think whatever is right; and no man must differ from me.' So our dungeon is to be made a little wider than that of the Orthodox; it must be a dungeon still. I detest this bolt-and-shackle business, as applied to thought. Pray let men think as they please, without fearing the stocks if they do not think just as their fathers did a thousand years ago." Again, in 1837, the publication of Alcott's *Conversations*, as we have seen, called out in the same "Advertiser," as well as in the "Courier," a like proscriptive and in-

tolerant spirit; and a revolted minister in Boston, Abner Kneeland, had been arraigned for blasphemy in publishing some attack on the popular theology. These were small matters, however, not much heard of beyond Boston; while the heresy of Emerson had much longer and more distant echoes. Of his discourse and its effect, Parker, who heard it, wrote thus to his friend George Ellis in England, Aug. 7, 1838:—

“You know Emerson was to preach the sermon before the graduating class. I heard it; it was the noblest of all his performances,—a little exaggerated, with some philosophical untruth, it seems to me, but the noblest, the most inspiring strain I ever listened to. It caused a great outcry: one shouting, ‘The Philistines be upon us;’ another, ‘We be all dead men;’ while the majority called out, ‘Atheism.’ The Dean (Dr. J. G. Palfrey) said, ‘That part of it, as I apprehend, which was not folly, was downright atheism.’ It has made a great noise. Mr. Norton opened a cannonade with a broadside aimed at Emerson, Cousin, Carlyle, Schleiermacher, Shelley, and a ‘Paper called the Western Messenger.’ This provoked several replies,—one of singular beauty from Theophilus Parsons;¹ one

¹ Parker adds here: “Sometimes the great ‘Statement of Reasons’ himself [Andrews Norton] was laid very neatly on his back, exclaiming the most furious things in the most courtly language.” The next year Professor Norton was chosen to give the annual address at the Divinity School; and

from the iron pen of Brownson, in the 'Post;' and one from J. F. Clarke in defence of the article in the 'Messenger.' Ministers preached on Emerson's sermon. Henry Ware delivered a sermon on the Personality of God (which, it is said, Emerson denies); and the students of the Divinity School come out, cap in hand, and say 'Peccavimus omnes,' and the last class in particular, and request Henry Ware to publish his sermon, which is said to be a very good one and to the point. Brownson writes a fierce review in the Quarterly, which, after all, is rather good than bad, though it contains some severities; Chandler Robbins speaks mildly, as his manner is, of the whole affair, but calls the rant of denouncing Emerson 'a vulgar clamor' and 'the popular roar.' Andrews Norton is indignant thereat; and this very minute I have read a fourth article of his, in this morning's 'Advertiser,' on Emerson, in which he says infidelity and atheism have been long preached by the Unitarian ministers,—not by all, but by some few. I wish he had held them up to the reprobation of the world, that we may see who are to be sent straight to hell, before they die. All this makes a world of talk. It is thought Chaos is

it contained so many misrepresentations, so little true learning or charity, so much arrogance and ignorance, that George Ripley took occasion to demolish it in a pamphlet, where occurs that once famous *mot*, "A knowledge of German is no merit; but the want of it in those who undertake to expound German theology is an inconvenience." Neither Ripley nor Parker lacked German.

coming back; the world is coming to an end. Some seem to think that Christianity, which has weathered some storms, will not be able to stand this gale, and that Truth, after all my Lord Bacon has said, will have to give up now. For my own part, I see that the sun still shines, the rain rains, and the dogs bark; and I have spread doubts whether Emerson will overturn Christianity this time. . . . You know our old friend Kneeland was sentenced to be 'jugged' for a time, and that sundry worthy men thought of a petition for his pardon. It was presented, and produced a great sensation. [Dr. Channing had signed this petition.] All the gig-men of Boston rose and made a great shout, saying, 'Dr. Channing is an old fool; he wants to bring himself into notoriety; he cares nothing about religion or morality. Now we see through the Doctor!' So they got up a remonstrance, and Abner was jugged for sixty days; but he will come out as beer from a bottle, all foaming, and will make others foam. . . . The charm of all is that Abner got Emerson's address to the students, and read it to his followers, as better infidelity than he could write himself. The Lord knows how the matter will end, but the end is not yet."

Such jocose narratives hardly do justice to the gravity of the situation created in New England by the long advance which Emerson had made in religious thought and social reconstruction by his Divinity School address. It was delivered July 15; and on the 24th Emerson gave another strik-

ing discourse, on "Literary Ethics," at Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire. Writing to Carlyle (July 30, 1838), he explains the occasion of these addresses by saying, "Though I hate American pleniloquence, I cannot easily say *no* to young men who bid me speak also. And both these are now in press. The first I hear is very offensive. I will now try to hold my tongue until next winter." He was not allowed to keep silent, for the Boston "Advertiser" of August 27 contained Mr. Norton's first attack, in which he forgot his usual courtesy so far as to say of his former pupil — for Emerson had made some slight studies in divinity with him, as well as with Dr. Channing — what accorded neither with truth nor urbanity:—

"Silly women and silly young men, it is to be feared, have been drawn away from their Christian faith, if not divorced from all that can properly be called religion. The evil is becoming for the time disastrous and alarming, and of this fact there could hardly be a more extraordinary and ill-boding evidence than this address; concerning which it will be sufficient to state generally that the author professes to reject all belief in Christianity as a revelation, and that if he believes in God in the proper sense of the term (which one passage might have led his hearers to suppose), his language is very ill-judged and indecorous."

To such a tirade Emerson could make no reply; but to Henry Ware, Jr., whose colleague and successor he had been, and who wrote to him, July 16, expostulating on the address, Emerson wrote:—

“As my conviction is perfect in the substantial truth of the doctrine, and is not very new, you will see at once that it must appear to me very important that it be spoken; and I thought I would not pay the nobleness of my friends so mean a compliment as to suppress my opposition to their supposed view out of fear of offence. I would rather say to them, ‘These things look thus to me, to you otherwise; let us say out our uttermost word, and be the all-pervading truth, as it surely will, judge between us.’ . . . Your sermon I have read with attention. If it assails any doctrines of mine,—perhaps I am not so quick to see it as writers generally,—certainly I did not feel any disposition to depart from my habitual contentment that you should say your thought, whilst I say mine. It strikes me very oddly that good and wise men at Cambridge and Boston should think of raising me into an object of criticism,— . . . me, who was never esteemed near enough to the institutions and mind of society to deserve the notice of the masters of literature and religion. I have appreciated fully the advantage of my position, for I well know that there is no scholar less willing or less able to be a polemic. I delight in telling what I think; but if you ask how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am

the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see that either of these questions admits of an answer. . . . I shall read what you and other good men write, as I have always done, — glad when you speak my thought, and skipping the page that has nothing for me. I shall go on just as before, seeing whatever I can, and telling what I see; and, I suppose, with the same fortune that has hitherto attended me.”

To Carlyle, however, he wrote in a slightly different vein: —

“I have urged you to pay us a visit in America, and in Concord. At this moment I would not have you here on any account. The publication of my Address to the Divinity College has been the occasion of an outcry in all our leading local newspapers against my ‘infidelity, pantheism, and atheism.’ The writers warn all and sundry against me, and against whatever is supposed to be related to my connection of opinion, etc.; against Transcendentalism, Goethe, and *Carlyle*. I am heartily sorry to see this last aspect of the storm in our washbowl. For as Carlyle is nowise guilty, and has unpopuliarities of his own, I do not wish to embroil him in my parish differences. You were getting to be a great favorite with us all here, and are daily greater with the American public; but just now, *in Boston*, where I am known as your editor, I fear you lose by the association. Now, it is indispensable to your right influence here that you should never come before our people as one of a clique, but as a detached, that is,

universally associated man ; so I am happy, as I could not have thought, that you have not yielded yourself to my entreaties. Let us wait a little, until this foolish clamor be overblown. My position is fortunately such as to put me quite out of the reach of any real inconvenience from the panic-strikers or the panic-struck ; and indeed, so far as this uneasiness is a necessary result of mere inaction of mind, it seems to me very clear that if I live, my neighbors must look for a great many more shocks, and perhaps harder to bear.”¹

When Carlyle received the “heterodox pamphlet,” as he calls it (which was not till February, 1839), he wrote to Emerson : —

“A certain Mr. Coolidge,² a Boston man of clear iron visage and character, came down to me the other

¹ The Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence.

² This was the father of Mr. T. J. Coolidge, now minister to France. The call was made in November, 1838, and is mentioned by Sumner in one of his letters to G. S. Hillard, — unless, indeed, Sumner called twice on Carlyle, as he may well have done. In a letter to Sumner, dated Feb. 14, 1839, Carlyle says : “Could you return this newspaper fragment of the Socinian Pope to Mr. Coolidge, lest I lose it in the interim ? Doubtless he and you would like to see the poison, now that you are fortified with the antidote. Here it is, strong as prussic acid in my hand for a week past. If I knew Mr. Coolidge’s address, I would call for his lady and him, as it is my part to do.” Sumner adds : “Carlyle told me the strangest thing in the history of literature was his recent receipt of fifty pounds from America, on account of his French Revolution, which had never yielded him a farthing in Europe, and probably never would.”

day, with Charles Sumner ; he left a newspaper fragment, containing the ' Socinian Pope's denunciation of Emerson.' The thing denounced had not then arrived, though often asked for at Kennet's ; it did not arrive till yesterday, but had lain buried in bales of I know not what. We have read it only once, and are not yet at the bottom of it. Meanwhile, as I judge, the Socinian ' tempest in a washbowl ' is all according to nature, and will be profitable to you, not hurtful. A man is called to let his light shine before men ; but he ought to understand better and better what medium it is through, what retinas it falls on ; wherefore look *there*. I find in this, as in the two other Speeches, that noblest self-assertion and believing originality, which is like sacred fire, the *beginning* of whatsoever is to flame and work ; and for young men especially one sees not what could be more vivifying. Speak, therefore, while you feel called to do it, and when you feel called. . . . One of the strangest things about these New England Orations is a fact I have heard, but not yet seen, that a certain W. Gladstone, an Oxford crack scholar, Tory M.P. and devout Churchman of great talent and hope, has contrived to insert a piece of you (*first* Oration it must be) in a work of his on Church and State, which makes some figure at present. I know him for a solid, serious, silent-minded man ; but how with his Coleridge Shovel-Hattism he has contrived to relate himself to you, there is the mystery. True men of all creeds, it would seem, *are Brothers*."

A singular connection indeed, a long-concealed fraternity, was this between Emerson and Gladstone! The resemblance to Cardinal Newman was much more perceptible, and the Transcendentalism of New England had a curious correspondence and contrast with the Tractarian movement at Oxford, which was then going on, and in which Gladstone could not fail to take an interest. In replying to this letter, Emerson touches on the situation, and introduces Carlyle to the name of Alcott, saying (March 15, 1839): "I wish I could talk to you on the grave questions, graver than all literature, which the trifles of each day open. Our doing seems to be a gaudy screen or popinjay to divert the eye from our non-doing. I wish, too, you could know my friends here. A man named Bronson Alcott is a majestic soul, with whom conversation is possible. He is capable of truth, and gives me the same glad astonishment that he should exist which the world does."

A glimpse of Emerson while he was composing the "heterodox pamphlet," as seen by Alcott, will here be in place. In early June, 1839, after having declined for the present Emerson's invitation to fix his residence in Concord, Mr. Alcott made a three days' visit to his friend, which he thus records in his diary:—

"In the pleasant village of Concord, Emerson gives his days to the observation of nature, walking much, and recording his thought in his commonplace book, ready for use in his lectures. There, also, he sees his friends; and whatever of life or light may chance to come from interviews with them also supplies matter for the diary. Hence the freshness of all his discourses, — taken, as they are, from life and nature. We discussed various matters, among others my book, 'Psyche,'¹ part of which I read to him, and left the sheets for him to overlook, and decide on their fitness for publication. I enjoy his friendship greatly, and derive light from him. These three days were of value to me. He inspires me with confidence in my own powers, and checks all tendency to dishonor my faculties by unworthy labors. Of all my contemporaries, he knows me best and is my truest friend. . . . I joy deeply in the fact of his success. He has the ear of all the simple and meditative, the wise and believing, of this literary metropolis (Boston). Especially the young and hopeful listen with eagerness to his teachings, finding there some answer to the questionings of the deep and subtle instincts of their souls. They already hail

¹ The title of this book was suggested by the fanciful name which Mr. Alcott gave to his third daughter, Elizabeth, born in 1835, and dying at the age of twenty-one. Sonnet XVII. is addressed to her, and closes thus: —

"They did our hearts irreparable wrong
To break the promise of thy infancy, —
Ah me! life is not life, deprived of thee."

him as hierophant of a faith that is to quicken and regenerate the age. I have dedicated my book to him; but should he publish it on his own account, this would exclude such inscription of his name on its pages."

It was the recollection of such visits as this that in 1881, the year before Emerson's death, inspired the sonnet describing these walks about the fields and woods of Concord; and preserving mention of that peculiar habit of Emerson, always to step out in a clear night and observe the stars before he went to bed. Here is the sonnet:—

"Pleased, I recall those hours, so fair and free,
When all the long forenoons we two did toss
From lip to lip, in lively colloquy,
Plato, Plotinus, or famed schoolman's gloss,
Disporting in rapt thought and ecstasy.
Then by the tilting rail Millbrook we cross,
And sally through the fields to Walden wave,
Plunging within the cove, or swimming o'er;
Through woodpaths wending, he with gesture quick
Rhymes deftly in mid-air with circling stick,
Skims the smooth pebbles from the leafy shore,
Or deeper ripples raises as we lave;
Nor slumb'rous pillow touches at late night,
Till converse with the stars his eyes invite."

A fortnight later, this entry occurs in the diary (June 16, 1838):—

"Emerson returned my MSS. with his criticisms thereon. He points out the defects of the book, and

seems disposed to have me withhold it from publication. I judge this course best, and feel inclined at present to lay it aside, giving myself rather to action; whereby I shall chance to ripen my faculties, and enrich my genius for worthier composition, at some future day. Why should I court the public but to stagger its faith and belie my own ideas? I deem silence, living, deeds, a fairer style of publication; and my ministry will, I hope, favor such a purpose. For the present, then, I will withhold these papers. I will act, and let thinking spring more directly from deeds."

Mrs. Alcott's brother, Mr. May, though remaining faithful to his friendship, could not agree with Emerson in his declaration of spiritual independence made at the Divinity School. In a letter to Alcott (Nov. 3, 1838) Mr. May says:—

"Miss Thaxter gave me some account of your late conversation at Hingham.¹ You will not anywhere make many converts to your faith, but you may everywhere set many to thinking for themselves. For myself, I find Henry Ware's Discourse much more acceptable to my understanding, and grateful to my heart, than Mr. Emerson's. But I am, nevertheless, ashamed of the bitterness of spirit which some have shown to that

¹ These were the first conversations ever given publicly by Mr. Alcott to a company wholly of mature persons; and they were also given with some remuneration in money,—at the house of Miss Thaxter, as I suppose.

good man. He does us the most good who makes us think, inquire, reason, judge for ourselves, — not he who dictates a creed to us, though it were a perfect system of faith. Give my love to my sister, and tell her to be trustful, resigned, — a dear child, and not a perverse. All things will work together for the good of those who put their trust in God, — whether God be a being or the principle of right; although I confess, on the latter supposition, I should not feel so sure of this comforting truth. I believe an intelligent, living Being presides over all events. I wish I could better understand you and Mr. Emerson; and I wish you made yourselves more intelligible to others."

The dwindling school in Boston had by this time ceased to be profitable, and its friends subscribed money to keep it in operation. In the spring of 1839 (April 16) Emerson wrote to Alcott:—

I send my quarter's subscription to the Theophilanthropic School. I had hoped long ere this to have fixed a day to invite you here, but have a miserable succession of colds, growing each out of the other, like the leaves of a prickly pear. Now I am better, and expect to be in town in a day or two, and do up my errands. Meantime will you not now give your vacation pretty soon, and come and spend it here, — next week or the week after, I wish it could be. As soon as you know when you can come, will you not drop me a line in the mail, and apprise me? I have been writ-

ing a little, and arranging old papers more, and by and by I hope to get a shapely book of Genesis.

Yours, with respect and affection,

R. W. EMERSON.

These papers were perhaps the original collection for the first series of "Essays," not published, however, until 1841. But lecturing in Boston had gone on vigorously; one thousand copies of the "heterodox pamphlet" were sold, and, as Emerson wrote to Carlyle, "the ill-wind has blown over." Not so with his friend Alcott, whose fortunes continued to decline, though his spirit remained as high as ever. He spent the summer of 1839 in Scituate, near his brother-in-law, going there in July. In that month Emerson wrote him from Boston thus (July 22, 1839):—

"I trust you find at Scituate all the good influences of this fine season. Had I known that you would have been at Cambridge last Friday, I think I should have gone thither. I have 'Bettine,' with whom I have contracted an acquaintance which is all love and admiration on my part. All the criticism I have seen does the book the greatest injustice. Whilst we accuse the *position* of woman as false, see what a life a contemporary woman has dared to live! I think we owe her endless obligations. . . . I return Heraud's¹ tract, which I received lately."

¹ John A. Heraud was one of the English correspondents with whom Mr. Alcott was brought into communication by his friend the Pestalozzian Greaves, and was a copious writer

Late in October, 1839, Alcott and Margaret Fuller, who was then living at Jamaica Plain and holding conversations in Boston, paid a visit to Emerson at Concord. In her note to Alcott (Oct. 10, 1839) Margaret says:—

“As you desired me to fix the day for our visit to Concord, I write now to say that I can go a week from next Sunday, if that time would be agreeable to you. And if you should like to go then, will you send me a note through the Post-Office to let me know at what hour to expect you? I am afraid the leaves will have fallen, and the sweet south wind be weary of blowing before this long-expected Sunday arrives. But our friend at least will not disappoint us. He was here a day or two since, and looked in better health than on the day of many words at Watertown.”¹

for English periodicals. He was repugnant to Carlyle, who described him ludicrously to Emerson; but Emerson, and especially Alcott, had a regard for him, and did not call him “a cockney windbag,” as Carlyle did.

¹ This was one of the meetings of the Symposium, which were held at no regular times, but by appointment. In this case the meeting was at the house of Rev. Convers Francis, parish minister of Watertown. But the subject of the “many words” does not appear in Mr. Alcott’s reminiscences, which were printed in the “Boston Book Bulletin” about 1875.

Emerson writes in his journal, Oct. 21, 1839: “How can I not record so fair a fact as the visit of Alcott and Margaret Fuller, who came hither yesterday, and departed this morning? Very friendly influences these, each and both. Cold as I am, they are almost dear: I shall not, however, fill my page with the gifts or merits of either.”

Earlier in 1839 Mr. Alcott renewed the experiment of public conversations, this time at Lynn, where Rev. S. D. Robbins was then living, and near by a practical Transcendentalist, John W. Browne, a lawyer of ability practising in Boston. In Salem, not far off, also resided Jones Very, a poet and thinker of peculiar genius, whose little volume was published in 1839, edited by Emerson, and has since been republished, with a memoir, by Mr. William P. Andrews. This memoir includes passages from Emerson's journal concerning the spiritual condition of Very after an attack of insanity. As a special product and commentary of the Transcendental period, these notices of Jones Very deserve to be cited. Emerson says (October, 1838): —

“Jones Very had the manners of a man, — one, that is, to whom life was more than meat. He felt it, he said, an honor to wash his face, being, as it was, the temple of the Spirit. I ought not to omit to record the astonishment which seized all the company when our brave Saint the other day fronted the presiding Preacher. The Preacher began to tower and dogmatize with many words. Then I foresaw that his doom was fixed; and as soon as he had ceased speaking, the Saint set him right, and blew away all his words in an instant, — unhorsed him, I may say, and tumbled him along the ground in utter dismay, like my angel of

Heliodorus ; never was discomfiture more complete. In tones of genuine pathos he bid him wonder at the love which suffered him to speak there in his chair of things he knew nothing of ; one might expect to see the book taken from his hands and him thrust out of the room, and yet he was allowed to sit and talk, while every word he spoke was a step of departure from the truth ; and of this he commanded himself to bear witness."

Alcott's account of Very written down on the evening of Jan. 29, 1839, is equally striking :

"The conversation at Lynn this evening was well attended. Very was there. We had a splendid talk on Instinct. It was seen that on all the great occasions of life the soul acted from instinct ; and various instances from the corporeal, mental, and spiritual life were enumerated in illustration. We had deep insight into the soul. Robbins, Very, and Browne had each fine statements to make. I had much conversation with Very both before and after the general talk. He passed the night at Robbins's with me. He is a remarkable phenomenon. He affects me as a spectre. His look, tones, words, are all sepulchral. He is a voice from the tombs. He speaks of having once lived in the world amongst men and things, but of being now in the spirit ; time and space are not, save in the memory. This idea modifies all his thoughts and expressions, and the thoughts and expressions of others also. It is difficult for those who do not apprehend the state of his soul to converse with him. I find it quite possible,

by translating his thoughts into my own vocabulary, mentally. By so doing, we talk with ease, and understand each other. His speech is Oriental. By putting modern life into Eastern images, speech becomes quite possible with him. He is a psychological phenomenon of rare occurrence. He lives out of his organs; he is dead. Each thought of his soul, when spoken, each act of the body, implies a resurrection of the spiritual life. This somnambulist walks about on the earth, acting and speaking from the memory of his terrestrial experience, while his soul is in the presence of spiritual realities alone. Matter, space, time, men, things, remain to him merely as memories of a life now extinct. He is out of his senses, and in the instincts of the soul. The dark realm of Time — over whose spaces he once trod, and thence communicated through the senses — has passed away. Men and things recall him for moments, as ghosts and spectres of a life once lived, into the companionship of terrestrial relations; he stumbles awhile amidst the tombs, and speaks of the life that was, before he arose and became a supernatural being; he lingers yet a little while, but is hasty to depart and ascend into heaven. In him the resurrection has become a fact, seen with the eye.

“Such was the effect produced on the minds of the little circle at Robbins’s, as we sat and conversed with him till late in the night. It was the resurrection verified. We slept in the same apartment, and had much conversation after we retired. I think he will de cease soon. He dies by retreating slowly from the senses,

yet existing in them, by memory, when men or things are obtruded on his thought. Nature to him is a charnel-house, and the voices of men echoes of the dead who haunt its dark chambers.”¹

Jones Very, in fact, survived many years, but in a condition which Emerson described to me as “lamentably sane;” and though he wrote many verses after 1839, there was very little which resembled the inspiration of his early period. He criticised Emerson himself with much acuteness, saying to him in Concord, “I always felt, when I heard you speak, or read your writings, that you saw the truth better than others; yet I felt that your spirit was not quite right. It was

¹ He died at Salem in 1880, in his sixty-seventh year. I called on him there about 1861; and the chief subject of his conversation was the resurrection of the body, in which he told me that he fully and literally believed. In the autumn of 1871, when visiting the late Dr. George B. Loring, in company with my friend Edwin Morton, as we drove out Sunday afternoon, we overtook Very striding along Salem Neck in his afternoon walk. I told Dr. Loring what I have just related, — that Very was a believer in the resurrection of the body, — to which the handsome doctor replied, not without a certain complacency, “I would not be, if I had his body.” When Very was asked the difference between wisdom and genius, he replied, “Wisdom is of God; genius is the decay of wisdom.” He added, “To the pre-existent Shakspeare wisdom was offered; but he did not accept it, and so he died away into genius.”

as if a vein of colder air blew across me." Emerson adds:—

"He seemed to expect from me—once especially in Walden wood—a full acknowledgment of his mission, and a participation in the same. Seeing this, I asked him if he did not see that my thoughts and my position were constitutional; that it would be as false or impossible for me to say his things or try to occupy his ground as for him to usurp mine? After some frank and full explanation, he conceded this. When I met him afterwards, one evening at my lecture in Boston, I invited him to go home to Mr. Adams's with me and sleep; which he did. He slept in the room adjoining mine. Early next day, in the gray dawn, he came into my room and talked while I dressed. He said: 'When I was in Concord I tried to say you were also right; but the spirit said you were not right. It is just as if I should say it is not morning, but the Morning says it is the Morning.'"

The similarity of this experience to that which Mr. Alcott had with him in Lynn is noticeable. Before his insanity he was a tutor in Harvard College; and his remarkable essay on Shakspeare was written for a prize at Cambridge, which he took, although he finished it while an inmate of the Insane Asylum at Somerville, where the patients "severally thanked him when he came away, and told him he had been of great service to them."

At the close of 1839 Mr. Alcott wrote to his mother, summing up the events of the year, as follows (Dec. 28, 1839):—

DEAR MOTHER,—I have suffered too many months to pass by without an expression of my love and interest in yourself and in those with whom you dwell. We passed the summer at Scituate, near Mr. May, and late in September returned to our former Boston dwelling in Beach Street. We were all much benefited by the change of air and scenery. As I have no school now, and am much at home, the children pass an hour or two daily with me at their lessons. They are all well and thriving.

You may ask what I am about now. I reply, still at my old trade, *hoping*, which has thus far given food, shelter, raiment, and a few warm friends, who cherish me and mine in this time of need. And not in this my adopted city only, but over the seas. Several encouraging letters have come to me from friends in England, who appear to take that interest in my labors which my countrymen have not yet shown. Commendatory notices of my books have appeared in the London journals, and they wish to reprint my "Record of a School" in that city. My wife declares that I shall cross the water to find the sympathy and appreciation denied me at home; and I may. But all is indefinite just now. God has some task allotted and waiting for me, and will employ me in his service in his own time, with wages proportionate to my deserts. Nor am I an

idler even now. I have Sunday evening conversations at my house, and I meet circles during the week elsewhere. They are attended by parents, students of divinity, ministers, and many young persons, to the number of fifty or more. It is a pleasant and edifying mode of teaching. Dr. Alcott is living some miles out of the city, and making books as fast as ever. Your good friend Mrs. Shaw¹ remembers you with pleasure. A few evenings ago she took tea with us, and inquired if you still kept your diary. I must leave space for my wife.

Affectionately your son,

A. BRONSON ALCOTT.

¹ This was the wife of Lemuel Shaw, afterward Chief Justice of Massachusetts, and one of the two most eminent lawyers who ever lived there, — the other being Chief Justice Parsons. Mrs. Shaw was, I believe, a distant kinswoman of Mrs. Alcott; her eldest son, Lemuel, was one of the pupils in the Temple School, who took part in the Conversations on the Gospels, as reported by the Peabodies. Chief Justice Shaw, during his early years of practice in Boston (he was born at West Barnstable, son of the parish minister there), boarded with Mrs. William Emerson, the mother of Waldo and Charles Emerson, at her house on Beacon Street, near where the Athenæum now stands; and thus began an acquaintance with the Emerson family, which perhaps led him to place his son in the Temple School. It was from this Beacon Street house that Waldo Emerson used to drive his mother's cow down across Boston Common to her brother's pasture near the Providence Station.

This letter, like many others that might be quoted, illustrates the simple, affectionate character of the New England Transcendentalists, who, without exception, were good sons, good brothers, good husbands, and faithful to the duties of life. It was charged against them, now and then, that their doctrines struck at the root of all morality and all religion. Their lives disproved slander of this sort, which was often repeated by men of tainted reputation or loathsome character,—who may have sought to cover their own sins by accusing others of similar misdeeds. The droll alarm which attacked Boston and its neighborhood, when the new doctrines were publicly preached, could not be quieted even by the sensible monitions which came from Orthodox Andover. Dr. Park and Dr. Edwards, in 1839, thus wrote:—

“Some among us are troubled overmuch about the speculative notions of the day. It is well to be cautious,—not so well to be in a fright. It is a good thing to give heed lest the spirit of our religion be circumscribed or expelled; but it is needless to raise a panic because one man prefers this mode and another that of explaining the one faith. Let not the grasshopper become a burden to us, while we are so young a people. Let us see how men, good and true, are now speculating in foreign climes; and we shall be convinced that the sky does not close in with the earth

four or five miles from the spot where we happen to stand, — however central that spot may be. There are things in the world that we have never yet heard of."

These young Andover professors were both descended from Jonathan Edwards, who had written, a century earlier, —

"If the evidence of the Gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with an ordinary degree of knowledge are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God as well as learned men. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those."¹

¹ Edwards's Works, vol. viii. p. 310, edited by S. E. Dwight.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM CONCORD TO ENGLAND AND BACK.

It was now evident that Boston was no longer a suitable home for the Alcott family; that they needed country air and the associations of simple nature and rural life. Concord had been attracting them for years,—not only as the home of Emerson, which in itself might have been a sufficient magnet, but because its situation and its people were well adapted to a family compelled to plain living and devoted to high thinking. It was a small country village, surrounded by fields and woodlands, with a beautiful tame scenery, reminding one of English Warwickshire, and with a river as pleasant and as winding as the Avon. Its population was about eighteen hundred, almost wholly of English descent,—for the great Irish immigration did not begin till a year or two later, and the Scandinavians, who are now numerous there, hardly showed themselves before 1870. For nearly two hundred years it was a single par-

ish, covering an area of some thirty square miles; and even in 1839 it had an Established Church,—the Unitarian; a society of dissenters, the Calvinistic seceders from the first parish, who withdrew in 1826, under the lead of Dr. Beecher; and a small society of Universalists, whose little church, about 1860, passed into the hands of the Roman Catholics. Education was carefully looked after, both in public and private schools; and in 1839 Henry Thoreau and his brother John were teaching a private school in an original manner and with some methods similar to those which Mr. Alcott had introduced in Cheshire and Boston. The town contained, also, a cultivated society, at the head of which, though not then so recognized, stood the Emerson family, which consisted of Mr. Emerson himself, his wife and mother, and two young children. Closely connected with this family was that of Miss Elizabeth Hoar and of Mrs. Sarah Ripley, whose husband was an uncle of Mr. Emerson. The Thoreau family were then all living,—since all deceased and the family extinct,—and had become in some of its members almost inmates of the Emerson household. What attracted Emerson to Concord, and detained him there, was the rural scenery, the needful solitude, and the ties of kindred. These also were attractive with Alcott; but he felt, no

doubt, that quality in the place which Tacitus in his life of Agricola ascribes to Marseilles, — “the home and mistress of his pursuits, — a place where Grecian culture and provincial frugality mingled and happily united.”¹ In his volume of Sonnets, that which was last written, although standing midway in the book, describes Concord as the poet of two-and-eighty years looked back upon it: —

“Calm vale of comfort, peace, and industry,
Well doth thy name thy home-bred traits express! —
Considerate people, neighborly and free,
Proud of their monuments, their ancestry,
Their circling river’s quiet loveliness,
Their noble townsmen’s fame and history.
Nor less I glory in each goodly trait,
Child of another creed, a stricter State;
I chose thee for my haunt in troublous time,
My home in days of late prosperity,
And laud thee now in this familiar rhyme;
Here on thy bosom the last summons wait
To scenes, if lovelier, still reflecting thee,
Resplendent both in hope and memory.”

It was early in March, 1840, that the Alcotts determined to remove to Concord. There was no railroad then, and the journey required more

¹ Agricola was born at Fréjus, in France, and sent as a boy to Marseilles. “Parvulus sedem ac magistram studiorum Massiliam habuerit, locum Græca comitate et provinciali parsimonia mistum ac bene compositum.” — TACITUS, *Agricola*, iv.

preparation than would now be needed to travel the short twenty miles, even with such scanty household goods as remained after the losses in Boston. Mrs. Alcott thus announced the step to her brother (March 13, 1840):—

“I know you feel anxious to hear of our decision. It is made, and we go to Concord, for another experiment in the art of living, on the last week in March. We have found a small cottage, with a large garden and an acre of ground, for \$50 a year. It is about a mile from the Emersons’, and a quarter of a mile from the village;¹ a short distance from Mr. Hoar’s, and near the river. The land Mr. Alcott thinks altogether superior to the Scituate soil; and on many accounts his local and social relations are more agreeable to him than in that region. The prejudices in this direction are all favorable to him. A course of conversations has been suggested in Lexington for him; and there is more liberality of sentiment on all subjects that he is interested in than in some regions. Mr. Alcott hopes to get his garden tools, and to pay for transportation,

¹ The measurements of Mrs. Alcott, being taken by guess, were not exact. The Hosmer Cottage is a good half-mile from the village centre, although on the western side of the then straggling village. It was the jointure or tenant cottage of a large farmhouse built by Adjutant Hosmer (afterward Major and Sheriff) in 1764, and stood modestly near its portlier neighbor-mansion, facing Concord River at long range across the fields, and with fields all about it on three sides, in which Mr. Alcott labored for hire.

from the sale of his school-room furniture, and from articles of household use which our little house will not accommodate. My ability to work is better than it has been; but my constitution is more enfeebled than I am willing to realize. Yet the fact is forced upon me too often and powerfully not to carry conviction.

“But I will not anticipate evils. The quiet, pure air, and genial influences of the approaching season may promote a more vigorous state of health; and then we cannot materially suffer, even if the patience of the most tried friendship should weary of our dependence, and love should chill by our absence. I have entered into all the essentials which will be interesting to you. I hope you will be here before we leave.

“Yours ever in the bonds of gratitude and affection.”

As often happens, the moving was delayed, by illness or bad weather; and it was not until April 6 that Mr. Alcott informed his brother May of their arrival in the promised land. He wrote:—

“I have again planted myself, and am seeking to strike my roots into the soil, if it shall prove productive of even the scantiest sustenance for our common wants. My little cottage and garden lie low in the landscape; but there is the broad sky overhead, and something still of its depth of azure in my hopes. If I have regrets, the chiefest of these is that in gaining Emerson as a neighbor, I have lost yourself. The river would flow

by us more sweetly, and the fields be greener, were you also in our near neighborhood. The day was propitious for our removal. We passed the night at the Middlesex Hotel, in the village, and entered our cottage early next morning. It pleases the good housewife and the little ones. I wish we may find our new situation all we desire for earning an honest independence of others. And must I own that sometimes in our straitened moments I have even wished some portion of the gifts with which I have been blessed had been withheld, if I might thereby have been brought into closer sympathy with the ordinary pursuits of mankind? Oh, my brother! hardest of trials is this one, — of being sundered from my kind, and left to tread the solitudes without an approving voice or kindly smile from any one. Your sister is as energetic and brave as you could desire for meeting the new conditions; and we are doubly indebted and truly grateful for all the kind consideration of yourself and our friends."

At this time the Alcott children were three daughters, — Anna, nine years old, Louisa eight, and Lizzie five years; a son, born in the troubled years at Boston, did not survive. A fourth girl, named Abby May, was born in the Hosmer Cottage, July 28, 1840. These were the "little women" of Miss Alcott's book; and it was their life in Concord which she specially described. To children it was a more idyllic existence than to

the toiling, anxious father and mother. Writing long afterward, Mrs. Alcott said:—

“I believe nothing demoralizing or ignoble has ever been done to keep up my position in society. I have labored, hand and brain, for the support of my family. The conditions of our life have been complicated, and difficult to understand; but we have submitted to no mean subterfuge, no ignoble surrender. The majesty and power of goodness have sustained us; and we call no man master.”

The same remark might have been made by her husband; indeed, this brave woman meant to speak for both, and for the children. But there were many hardships in their lives from this time onward. At first Mr. Alcott trusted he could support his family by labor in his acre, and for the farmers around him. He began bravely, he worked faithfully, and his hand had not forgot its cunning. But he toiled with a divided mind; his heart was still upon his true mission in the world,—to inspire thought, and to share the spiritual tasks of the time. He must still go to the Symposium, must take part in Non-Resistance meetings and Bible conventions. With a little capital and an unsolicited attention, he could have prospered; for he had bodily vigor, frugal habits, and an earnest purpose. Success in this

twofold allegiance could not befall him; and his eyes soon turned toward England, where for years he had been gaining friends. The first of these to address Mr. Alcott was a man of remarkable history, James Pierrepont Greaves, who wrote from London, Sept. 4, 1837, inviting correspondence with his brother Pestalozzian, then at the head of the Temple School. From a sketch of Greaves written by Emerson for the "Dial," we learn that he was born in 1777, and died in March, 1842; two of his brothers were clergymen of the Church of England, both of whom, as Charles Lane said, "subsequently, in a better understanding of that which is to be revered, ceased to place the term 'Reverend' before their names." Emerson goes on to say:—

"Mr. Greaves was formerly a wealthy merchant in the city of London, but was deprived of his property by French spoliation in Napoleon's time. Quitting business, he travelled and resided in Germany for some time. His leisure was given to books of the deepest character; and in Switzerland he found a brother in Pestalozzi. With him he remained ten years, living abstemiously, almost on biscuit and water; and though they never learned each the other's language, their daily intercourse appears to have been of the deepest and happiest kind. Mr. Greaves there made himself useful in a variety of ways. Pestalozzi declared that Mr.

Greaves understood his aim and methods better than any other observer. And he there became acquainted with some eminent persons. Mr. Greaves, on his return to England, introduced as much as he could of the method and life whose beautiful and successful operations he had witnessed ; and although almost all that he did was misunderstood or dragged downwards, he has been a chief instrument in the regeneration of the British schools. For a single and unknown individual his influence has been extensive. He set on foot infant schools, and was for many years Secretary to the Infant School Society, which office brought him in contact with many parties ; and he has connected himself with almost every effort for human emancipation. In this work he was engaged up to the time of his death.¹ . . . Strauss, the author of the 'Life of Christ,' was a pupil of Mr. Greaves, when he held conversations in one of the colleges of Germany, after leaving Pestalozzi. His friend, Mr. Charles Lane, is engaged in arranging and editing his manuscript remains."

It will at once be seen how attractive such a character as this must have been to Bronson Alcott, who in the latter part of 1837 sent him twelve copies of the "Conversations on the Gospels;" but for some reason or other his answer to the letter of September, 1837, failed to reach Mr.

¹ The Dial, vol. iii. pp. 228-230. The quotations in this article are from Alcott, W. Oldham, and C. Lane, so far as they relate to Mr. Greaves.

Greaves. Accordingly (June 18, 1838) William Oldham wrote as follows to Mr. Alcott, acknowledging the receipt of the "Conversations," on behalf of Mr. Greaves, who styled it "an invaluable work," and thus proceeding:—

"Mr. Greaves paid fifteen shillings for freight and duty, but does not know to whom he is to pay the value of the books. He will be obliged for your instructions on this point, in order that he may discharge the pecuniary debt. He will also esteem it an additional favor if you will have the kindness to forward him a copy or two of the second edition of the 'Record of a School,' with as little delay as possible; also, if convenient, ten or twelve copies of the third volume of the 'Conversations on the Gospels.' It is now about ten months since Mr. Greaves first wrote to you, and he is still without any reply to his letter. Supposing your letter may have been lost, I beg to request your indulgence of a second communication, should you be inwardly disposed and outwardly able to comply with our desire in this particular. Any instructions and monitions or divine sympathies you may forward us will be thankfully received, and used for the universal good.

"Your most affectionate, faithful servant in progressive conditions."¹

¹ Besides Mr. J. P. Greaves, whose London address was 4 Burton Crescent, there seems to have been another Greaves, a bookseller, at 14 York Street, Covent Garden, who wrote to Mr. Alcott, Oct. 5, 1837, as follows: "I have just received three copies of your 'Conversations

In Mr. Alcott's lost reply to Mr. J. P. Greaves, he assured his English friend of his strong desire "to know more intimately one so deeply interested in man and favorably known as a friend of human culture. A visit from you," he added, "would indeed be most agreeable." In the diary for 1837 he further says:—

"I shall transmit to him a statement of my purposes, views, and practices, and send him besides copies of my works, which should also be transmitted for sale to

on the Gospels,' through Messrs. Hilliard, Gray, & Co., of your city, and am only sorry there were so few. I shall be glad to receive a dozen copies or more. I have no doubt that if properly advertised they would sell well. I have had, and a few still remain, the 'Record of a School.' I am much surprised that authors on your side of the Atlantic do not make some arrangement for their works here. If I were to receive early sheets, I have the means of obtaining a premium for the monopoly of publishers, but this does not give copyright. If you will add a few copies of any other of your own works, I shall be happy to make them known." Commenting on this, the diary says: "The sale of these works has been scanty. Only about three hundred copies of the 'Conversations' have been disposed of, and the sale at present is by no means brisk. Of the 'Record of a School,' one half of an edition of seventeen hundred copies was sold. The second edition, revised, and with additions, remains without a purchaser. It has never been advertised as it should have been. The publishers, having no interest in them beyond seeing their names on the titlepage, take small pains to make them known by generous advertisement or circulation." This was in November, 1837.

some respectable house in London. No copies have as yet, I believe, been taken from this country, unless by some friend now and then, for private use. Both the 'Record of a School' and the 'Conversations on the Gospels' would find a few readers, I imagine, in England. Minds there must be, across the water, disposed to favor improved theories on the nature of man, and the means of unfolding his nature. This would appear from the statement of Mr. Greaves."¹

A more active correspondent of Alcott in 1838-1840 was that singular man of letters and literary scraps, John A. Heraud, who for two years (1838-1839) edited a perishable periodical, "The Monthly Magazine," in London, wherein he reviewed, in September, 1839, the publications of Alcott and Emerson up to that time,—except the Divinity School Address, and the three volumes of Temple School Conversations. He there ascribed Emerson's "Nature" to Alcott, and reviewed it with extracts, as such,—specially quoting the passage already cited in the last chapter, which was suggested by Alcott. What Emerson said of this singular ascription of his first book to an-

¹ Mr. Alcott found, on recurring to an American edition of the "Letters of Pestalozzi on the Education of Infancy," published at Boston in 1830, some mention of Mr. Greaves, to whom these letters were, in fact, addressed. They were written in German, and translated by a Bostonian.

other author does not appear; but three years later he described Heraud, as a disciple of Coleridge, a friend and associate of Mr. Greaves, "and for the last years more conspicuous than any other writer in that connection of opinion."

Emerson further said: —

"The Monthly Magazine, during his editorship, really was conducted in a bolder and more creative spirit than any other British journal; and though papers on the highest Transcendental themes were found in odd vicinity with the lowest class of flash and so-called comic tales, yet a necessity, we suppose of British taste, made these strange bed-fellows acquainted, and Mr. Heraud had done what he could. His papers, called 'Foreign Aids to Self-Intelligence,' were of signal merit, especially the papers on Boehmen and Swedenborg. The last is, we think, the very first attempt to do justice to this mystic, by an analysis of his total works; and though avowedly imperfect is, as far as it goes, a faithful piece of criticism. Mr. Heraud is described by his friends as the most amiable of men, and a fluent and popular lecturer on the affirmative philosophy. He has recently intimated a wish to cross the Atlantic, and read in Boston a course of six lectures on the subject of Christism as distinct from Christianity."

Alas! Heraud was not always so fortunate as to have his portrait painted by his friends. Long

before the above passage was written, Emerson (Dec. 12, 1839) had asked Carlyle, "What manner of person is Heraud?" to which Carlyle, April 1, 1840, gave this overwhelming answer: ¹—

"Heraud is a loquacious, scribacious little man, of middle age, of parboiled greasy aspect, whom Leigh Hunt describes as 'wavering in the most astonishing manner between Something and Nothing.' To me he is chiefly remarkable as being still—with his entirely enormous stock of vanity and very small stock of faculty—out of Bedlam. He picked up a notion or two from Coleridge many years ago, and has ever since been rattling them in his head, like peas in an empty bladder, and calling on the world to 'list the Music of the spheres.' He escapes *assassination*, as I calculate, chiefly by being the cheerfulest, best-natured little creature extant. You cannot kill him, he laughs so softly, even when he is like killing you. John Mill said, 'I forgive him freely for interpreting the Universe, now when I find he cannot pronounce his *h's*.' Really this

¹ Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, first edition, vol. i. p. 277. It is curious that the editor of this volume, who refers to an "account of Heraud by an admirer in the 'Dial' for 1842, p. 241" (a misprint for 231), did not know that Emerson himself was this "admirer." The article begins on page 227, and ends on page 247, and is immediately followed by a notice of Mr. Greaves from another hand. Emerson's article is made up in part from letters and papers sent by Alcott from England to Concord.

is no caricature; you have not seen the match of Heraud in your days. I mentioned to him once that Novalis had said, 'The highest problem of Authorship is the writing of a Bible.' 'That is precisely what I am doing,' answered the aspiring, unaspiring."

Possibly unjust as this lively sketch may have been, it describes typically a class of Englishmen, not quite so offensive to Emerson as to Carlyle, but extremely antipathetic to both. Yet Heraud knew how to quote tolerably well, and was of some service, doubtless, to the cause of progress in England, with which in 1840 Carlyle was still connected,—calling himself, in this very letter, "the prophet of spiritual Sansculottism." Wordsworth also had for a while a favorable opinion of Heraud, and wrote to him, Feb. 28, 1838, thanking him for his "able application of Mr. Coleridge's principles to the subject of poetry," and adding: "Your genius and reflective powers entitle you to write upon that high argument."¹

¹ Wordsworth continued, — and the passage is curious, — "Fraser's Magazine, nor any other, do I ever see, but by merest chance, except only Blackwood's, which is sent me every quarter by the editor. But if Fraser had fallen in my way with your criticism in it, unless I had happened to know that it was yours, I should not have read it. There is commonly no bit of reading that I relish so little as notices of my own poems." In this he much resembled Emerson.

As a poet in actual operation, however, Heraud cannot be praised,—for example, this passage from his “Ode on the Creation”:—

“Vision of Being beatific —
O! Hyaline,
Clear and divine,
That glasses the Deific!
Enamored of his own
Idea, never mute, never alone,
Crowned, sceptred ever, on Eternal Throne,
The Lawgiver himself revealed in power.

“Thou self-dilator!
And theirs, who shall from thee be sent,
The Poets, holy men, whilere
Into whose souls inspired
Wisdom was wont to enter, and had made
Them friends of God, and prophets too —
Precursors of thy Son — and since
Hath signed them on the forehead for thy sons,
Adopted ones,

.
Convoyed on high by the banded forces
Of Flame and Whirlwind irresistible,
The Chariot and the Horses
Of Israel.”

Hardly anything in the wild vagaries of Transcendental literature can compare with verses like these. But not all Alcott's English friends were poets. Charles Lane, for example, was a very prosaic person, described by Emerson as “for many years manager of the ‘London Mercantile

Price Current;’ a man of fine intellectual nature, inspired and hallowed by a profound faith. This is no man of letters, but a man of ideas. Deep opens below deep in his thought, and for the solution of each new problem he recurs, with new success, to the highest truth, to that which is most generous, most simple, and most powerful; to that which cannot be comprehended, or overseen, or exhausted. His words come to us like the voices of home out of a far country.” Such a man, combining hard practical qualities with moral enthusiasm, was more attractive both to Emerson and Alcott, than the Boston money-lender, whom in his diary for March, 1839, Alcott had thus described:—

“N——, a dapperling, who treads ’Change, and once lent me a round thousand during my days of prosperity in the Temple, came into the bookstore where I was reading this afternoon. ‘How d’ ye do?’ said he, with an air of infinite good-will. ‘Quite well,’ said I, retaining the book in my hand. ‘And how is your school?’ ‘I have none.’ ‘But you have a few children, have you not?’ inquired he, with apparent concern. ‘Yes, a few children come daily to my house, but that does not give me a school.’ ‘You will have more by and by; it takes time to get a-going.’ ‘No, less, before more. I must have parents before I can have children. My teaching is to them.’ He began to look blank. ‘A man,’ I con-

tinued, 'who swims with the stream, shall indeed do well; but if, for conscience' sake, he turn and breast it, implying that it sets the wrong way, he is deemed fool-hardy; and if he duck under and disappear, it is just retribution, and best of all means of amendment. Yet see! he rises again in his time, lord of the wave, whose current he has turned in his own direction.' He had something to say to the bookseller, and I resumed my reading, without selling my thought to the Mammon King. On such terms can you alone treat with those whose gospel is one of profit and loss, whose treasures are at the mercy of the winds and waves of popular feeling, and whose pilot is custom."

These English friends had established a school to promote their new ideas, at Ham Common, near Richmond, and given it the name of "Alcott House," in honor of the author of "Conversations on the Gospels." At the head of this school was a young Englishman, Henry G. Wright, who was also an author, and concerning whom, when he came to see him in 1842, Alcott, who might easily be a little partial to a teacher following his own methods, thus wrote to Emerson:—

"Mr. Wright is a younger disciple of the same eternal verity which I have loved and served so long. You have never seen his like,—so deep and serene, so clear, so true, and so good. His school is a most refreshing and happy place. The children are mostly under twelve

years of age, of both sexes; and his art and method of education simple and natural. It seemed like being again in my own school, save that a wiser wisdom directs, and a lovelier love presides over its order and teachings. He is not yet thirty years of age, but he has more genius for education than any man I have seen; and not of children alone, but he possesses the rare art of teaching men and women. What I have dreamed and stammered and preached and prayed about so long, is in him clear and definite. It is life, influence, reality. He cherishes hopes of making our land the place of his experiment in human culture, and of proving to others the worth of the divine idea that now fills and exalts him."

Is it any wonder that by a circle so devoted to the same thoughts which our Connecticut school-master had cherished ever since he began his Cheshire innovation on the old routine of instruction, he should be drawn away from a hireling's labor in Concord,— never too well repaid,— toward this English experiment, which promised to become an institution, like everything else in that land of settled and prosperous establishments? Alcott did not at first feel this attraction strongly,— on the contrary, he rejoiced in his Concord surroundings, and was congratulated by friends that he had found at last the Paradise he sought. Miss Thaxter, writing from Hingham (July, 1840),

said: "It seems to me you have now attained entire independence of the world. I rejoice that your own hands minister to your necessities, and that, while so doing, your spirit can fulfil its purpose of love and humanity, unimpeded, unshackled. Yes, I do rejoice that you are hiring yourself at daily labor; you are thus rendering a most essential service to the community and the age." And Dr. Channing, a year before his death, wrote to Miss Peabody much to the same effect (July, 1841):—

"Mr. Alcott little suspects how my heart goes out to him. One of my dearest ideas and hopes is the union of Labor and Culture. I wish to see labor honored, and united with the free development of the intellect and heart. Mr. Alcott, hiring himself out for day-labor and at the same time living in a region of high thought, is, perhaps, the most interesting object in our Commonwealth. Orpheus at the plough is after my own heart; there he teaches a grand lesson,—more than most of us teach by the pen."

This ideal of Channing was Alcott's also, and he began to realize it,—held conversations as well as the plough; was invited to explain to the young women at the State Normal School in Lexington what Transcendentalism might be, and went thither and did so; writing then to

Mr. May about it and also of the birth of May Alcott: —

CONCORD, July 29, 1840.

DEAR BROTHER, — I was sorry to miss you at Lexington, and your sister was disappointed that she could not present with her own hands the quiet little lady who entered our household at dawn on Sunday. But you will come and salute both mother and babe for yourself. Providence, it seems, decrees to us daughters of love instead of sons of light. We joyfully acquiesce in this dispensation, and hopefully rear women for the new order of things. You left just before I reached Professor Pierce's school. He spoke of you with interest, and the young ladies were much encouraged by your address. I had two pleasant hours with them after you had spoken to them, and secured their deep and earnest attention. I could not expect to kindle an abiding enthusiasm by a single utterance. I have spent several days in the harvest fields, and find unexpected elasticity and vigor in the earth. To-morrow I enter the meadows, and swing the scythe again. Labor is indeed sweet and wholesome, nor is it an austere decree which leads man into the fields to earn his bread by the sweat of his face. Labor invests him with his primeval dignity. Sloth is the tempter that beguiles, and casts him out of his Paradise of innocence. But my daughter waits, and the berries too, and I must draw my Georgic to an abrupt close; yet not without adding the regards of mother and babe with my own.

So things went on for a time; but soon after Dr. Channing had written as above, we find new plans debated, and another home talked of. Sept. 28, 1841, Mr. Alcott says to his brother Junius:—

“ I have deferred writing till I could speak definitely concerning our residence for the coming winter. This is now determined; we shall remain here till spring, and await the indications of Providence meanwhile. My brother May wishes us to live near him, and offers a house and farm, with other conveniences. Our friends at North Providence (Christopher Greene and William Chace) urge us to live with them, and offer to build a cottage for us at ‘Holly Home,’ if we will come and occupy it. We hesitate to accept either. But will you come and pass the winter with us, as you expressed the wish when you were here last? I think we can make it agreeable to you, and you can join us in any enterprise that we may undertake in the spring. You will find time for reading and thought, and we can compare our views, as we have had no opportunity for doing hitherto. I think you might pass a profitable and pleasant winter in this way. . . . Last week I attended a Convention of Non-Resistants in Boston. Much was said and more implied, on the great questions of reform; and I left with the conviction deepened that a few years will bring changes in opinions and institutions, of which few persons now dream. Things are rushing fast to judgment, and only the just and true can survive the

ordeal. Another Convention is called for October, when questions of grave moment are to be discussed, and measures for reform organized. I wish you may come and attend it with myself. . . . I sent you a copy of the 'Plain Speaker' a week or two since. The editors (C. Greene and W. M. Chace), young men from Providence, were here last week, — and my wife and babe are now passing a few days with them at 'Holly Home,' a charming retreat, about two miles from Providence. I passed a week there lately, and was much pleased with place and people. You would be delighted with them, and they would take great pleasure in you."

Providence was at that time one of the centres of the new thought; for there was a flourishing school, founded by Hiram Fuller, in which Alcott's principles were adopted, and where Margaret Fuller had taught from 1837 to 1839. There also were young men, such as Chace and Greene (who married Chace's sister), in whom the *Zeitgeist*, assisted by Emerson, had kindled the true fire.

Of the October convention, from which Alcott hoped so much, one of these Providence youths, William Chace, was secretary, while Edmund Quincy was president; it was in session three days, and ended with a call for another convention, — to consider the Bible, and what to do therewith, under the new dispensation. The committee

to call this second Sanhedrim were Emerson, Alcott, Mrs. Maria Chapman, and Edmund Quincy. The last-named, then earnest in his radicalism to the verge of common-sense, wrote to Alcott (Jan. 4, 1842): —

“The Bible Convention must needs be an important event in the great revolution which is silently changing the hearts and minds of men, and which will of necessity change the outward institutions — which are but the visible signs, the outward manifestation, of the inward state — as the work of regeneration goes on.”

At the October convention the miracle was wrought of converting the “Daily Advertiser” to a fair and even eulogistic view of Alcott and his eloquence; for its reporter said of him: —

“Some of the speeches were exceedingly incongruous, irrational, absurd, and even nonsensical. Fanaticism and hallucination had here full opportunity of showing themselves in a comparatively harmless position. Some declare positively that they are directly inspired, and sent expressly by God, to declare His will to the people. The Mormon here preaches his strange doctrine, talks of the restoration of the ‘lost books of the Bible,’ explains the mystery of the Apocalypse, and predicts, by actual revelation from God, the second coming of Christ, and the end of the world within the next thirty years. He does not know the precise year. None but the Mormons — the ‘latter-day Saints’ — can be saved.

The young Deist or Atheist declaims his incoherent sentiments, reviles Jesus of Nazareth, speaks of his vices, and exhibits to disgust his own vanity and want of common-sense. Another apparently pious, educated, sincere, candid, refined speaker calls the young Deist his friend, and very modestly differs from him in most things. A lady gives her opinion that a human being consists of a body, a soul, and a spirit, — three distinct parts: the body and soul are both mortal; the spirit is immortal. In proof, she cited the text which speaks of the word of truth being like a two-edged sword, dividing the soul from the spirit.

“There was one or two very able and interesting addresses. A most impressive and happy one from A. Bronson Alcott, exhibiting his peculiar sentiments and explaining his Transcendental doctrines, as far as could be done (for he admitted they could not be explained by words), was listened to with great attention. We very much regret that it was not taken down in short-hand, word for word; for we are satisfied that the speaker, by his utmost efforts, could never in his closet commit to paper anything equal to it. Everything was methodical, clear, and explicit; not a word misplaced or superfluous or equivocal; all in excellent taste, delivered calmly and distinctly, and with the utmost modesty and candor. We have never heard any exposition of the Transcendental doctrines so intelligently made or placed in so favorable an aspect, — though the speaker implicitly contended that this knowledge, or attainment, or divine *afflatus* (whatever it is) could

not be known or understood from others, but must be acquired, learned, and felt only by the soul itself, by means of its own efforts, — by purity, obedience, meditation, freedom (as far as possible) from actual sin, and by progress in goodness and piety. His attempted explanation of the miracles of Jesus was not so successful, — showing how little connection there is or may be between rationality and great purity, sincerity, and goodness.”

While these meetings, so characteristic of that fermenting period, were going on, Emerson, lecturing in Providence, wrote to Alcott this letter, which shows how much the plan of a visit to England had been considered between the two friends: —

PROVIDENCE, Feb. 12, 1842.

DEAR FRIEND, — I hoped to have returned to Concord to-day, and seen your face this evening. I must wait, I find, a few days longer. Meantime I write to say that although I was not very successful in my applications to our friends in Boston, in behalf of the voyage to England, — Mr. Phillips deeming himself unable to assist on account of his great recent expense in building, etc., and Mr. Lewis explaining that he had no power to frank a berth, as Mr. Cunard had never permitted it, — yet I am far from thinking the subject should be dropped. If it shall continue to seem profitable and desirable to yourself, as it has appeared, it will seem so to me. I think you need the diversion

and stimulus which so total a change in your habits and company will afford, without considering what further contingencies may accrue. Mr. and Mrs. J. Quincy, with whom I dined last Tuesday, expressed great goodwill to the plan. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, especially Mrs. L., did the same. But if rich men will not help us, poor men shall; and as I consider it more, it looks quite practicable. My brother William many years ago, I remember, sailed from Boston to Cork, and thence to Bremen, in a merchantman, for sixty dollars. Mr. Adams thinks an opportunity might occur to go to London in these days at no greater cost, and I have begged him to have his eye on any vessel from Boston to England and keep us informed. It seems to me as if your objects might be answered, and you might spend the summer in England and get back to America in the autumn, for a sum not exceeding four or five hundred dollars. It will give me great pleasure to be responsible to you for such an amount; and to more, if I shall be able, and more is necessary. I have no doubt that some of your friends will be glad to aid me in it; if they do not, I doubt not I shall know how to do without them.

Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON.

The "Mr. Phillips" here named was Jonathan Phillips, of Boston, a man of large wealth, which he used liberally, and a special friend and follower of Dr. Channing; Mr. Lewis was the Boston

agent of the newly established Cunard line of steamships; and Mr. Quincy was Josiah, the son and grandson of Josiah, — whose son Josiah had been one of the pupils at the Temple School. He was a college classmate of Emerson, and brother of Edmund Quincy, whose extreme opinions he did not share. Probably he contributed to the small fund that Emerson raised for this English mission; but most of the money came from the poet's own purse. A sailing ship was found, — the "Rosalind," — the passage was taken for May 7, 1842, (price, \$75); and Junius Alcott agreed to take his brother's place at the Hosmer Cottage during the six months' absence. The letter to Junius announcing this plan was as follows:

CONCORD, Feb. 27(?), 1842.

DEAR BROTHER, — I have deferred writing till I should have definite intelligence to communicate concerning my future plans. As I now have some light on these, I hasten to give you the benefit. I propose visiting my friends in England, and wish you would come and take my place in the family during my absence. Here is my cottage and its inmates — my library, garden, and acre, if you wish to cultivate it — at your service. It will be comforting to leave all in your care and to your protection. Come then, — if your wishes and affairs second my request. I find little for my hands to do here; every avenue to honest em-

ployment seems closed to me ; no one wants me, since I am not a profitable hireling, and rather a questionable person to employ. The winter is gone. I have passed days in the woods, wielding the axe ; but it amounts to little, while my thoughts and interests are far away, and the strokes fall heavy ; the best of it is the echo resounding from the blows. These Englishmen have manifested an interest in my labors which my countrymen deny me. So I seek them with something of the sympathy of an intelligent friendship ; perhaps to find aid in my cherished pursuits. I sometimes even think that I go honored, rather than disgraced, by the neglect of my countrymen, save the few—the few, I may say—who bid me good speed across the seas, and furnish the means for my voyage. I think my winter has been the least hopeful of any period of my life.¹ The Bible Convention meets March 29. You will wish to attend it. I shall hope to sail soon after. Write immediately, as we wish to make all necessary arrangements in season.

¹ There was a darker period than this, after the failure of the Fruitlands experiment ; but hope and good cheer were the atmosphere of Alcott's life. Ellery Channing said, "I never saw that man without being cheered ;" and Thoreau added, "He is the best-natured man I ever met, — the rats and mice make their nests in him." Just after Alcott landed in England, a Boston attorney told Miss Peabody he was going to sell seven hundred and fifty copies, in sheets, of the "Conversations" for fifty dollars to trunkmakers for waste paper, — nine hundred pounds at five and one-half cents a pound.

Junius Alcott came from Oriskany, N. Y.; the Bible Convention met; Alcott was there, and in the debate he declared,—

“That he certainly considered the religious writings of the Brahmins and of Mahometans were inspired in like manner as the Christian Scriptures; though no books contain so full and faithful an exposition of eternal truth as do the Old and New Testaments. He hoped a collection of the Sacred Books of all races would be made, that we might then have the fullest revelation of God’s word, as uttered by the inspired writers of all past time. He spoke of the inspiration of Christ and of the Scriptures; and said he had come to consider the authenticity of all scripture,—not merely that of the Old or the New Testament,—to consider the nature of scripture, its absolute grounds and objects.”

After this last public utterance he sailed for England, May 8, with ten sovereigns in his red pocket-book and a bill of exchange for twenty pounds on Baring Brothers. Among his fellow-passengers was Mr. Mackintosh, a son of Sir James, who had married Miss Appleton, the sister of Mrs. Longfellow. The night before sailing, Garrison walked in from Cambridge to Morton Place, Boston, bringing him letters to Sir John Bowring, George Thompson, the Ashursts, and other English abolitionists. He arrived in England late in May, and from his letters to

Emerson, and those of his English friends, Emerson made up the long paper on "English Reformers" which appeared in the "Dial" of October, 1842, commencing thus: —

"Whilst Mr. Sparks visits England to explore the manuscripts of the Colonial Office, and Dr. Waagen on a mission of art, Mr. Alcott, whose genius and efforts in the great art of education have been more appreciated in England than in America, has now been spending some months in that country, with the aim to confer with the most eminent educators and philanthropists, in the hope to exchange intelligence, and import into this country whatever hints have been struck out there on the subject of literature and the First Philosophy. The design was worthy, and its first results have already reached us. Mr. Alcott was received with great cordiality of joy and respect by his friends in London, and presently found himself domesticated at an institution managed after his own methods and called after his name, — the school of Mr. Wright at Alcott House, Ham, Surrey. He was introduced to many men of literary and philanthropic distinction, and his arrival was made the occasion of meetings for public conversation on the great ethical questions of the day."

Mr. Alcott found little in the condition or the population of England in 1842 to encourage his labors there; but he did find a few enthusiastic persons who partook of his own philanthropic

idealism, and were eager to join his private efforts at social reform in New England. Some of his observations on persons and events in the mother country may here be cited:—

“*July 18, 1842.* Returned to Alcott House. — *19th.* Had much conversation with Mr. Wright on our union in New England. He inclines to return with me. — *Evening.* We walked to Wandsworth (six miles), and had a lively conversation there on education, and engaged to resume our conversation there on Tuesday evening next.

“*July 20.* Dined with W. J. Fox, and met Harwood, Dr. Elliotson, Mr. Lalor, and others. The conversation was prolonged until late in the evening, and ran on various topics, — Pythagorean diet, taxes, government, magnetism, poetry, the ‘Dial,’ Emerson, etc. It gave me little satisfaction. There was much argument, protestation, and but little from the heart. Our Club,¹ in its dotage even, was wiser far. I seemed to have fallen on Dr. Channing and the Unitarian Association.

“*July 21.* Called on J. M. Morgan, and saw his painting of a design for his ‘Self-Supporting Institution,’ at his rooms in Holborn. He discoursed long, and with great good-will, on his plans for relieving the needy and distressed; but relies on the Church for support, and seeks to redeem his own name from disgrace by denying his former intimacy with Mr. Owen. He is

¹ The Symposium.

another sad instance of apostasy from the principles so livingly affirmed by Mr. Greaves. I recognized but little of the wide humanity that pervades his 'Hampden in the Nineteenth Century.' Morgan, Biber, Heraud, Oldham, Smith, Marston, — these are all fallen; and there remain but Lane and Wright in whom the divine fire still burns. I saw George Thompson again, and heard O'Connell, Joseph Hume, M.P., Joseph Sturge, and Sydney Smith, at the Anti-Corn-Law conference at the King's Arms, Westminster. The meeting reminded me of our Abolition and Non-Resistance conventions; and the speakers of Garrison, Wright, and Phillips. Fierce denunciation, discontent, sedition, desperation, rang throughout the hall; but neither people, delegates, nor leaders seemed at all aware of the remedy for the social evils under which they are now writhing in sorrow, disappointment, hunger. It is not bread nor wages (and so I told Thompson), but property, gain, and the lust of gain, — these are the parents of the ills they suffer. But Thompson is too busy to hear, and the people too hungry to believe.

“Had a short interview with Robert Owen at his rooms in Pall Mall. He read me a letter which he had just written, addressed to Sir Robert Peel, proposing his remedy for the distress of the nation; but he seemed but little wiser than the Premier, Parliament, and Reformers. Property, property, still, — and the people still left enslaved to their lusts and passions. He asked me to breakfast with him at my convenience, which I promised to do, but scarce know why. 'Tis a

base errand, this of eating and drinking with lions, and I am getting heartily ashamed of it. Surely, I am made for better things. — *Evening*. At Heraud's: Barham, Marston, Wright, and others were there. We discussed printing a new Journal, to be supported from contributions from the Old World and the New, and issued quarterly. A good deal was said. Heraud and Barham deem Carlyle's interest essential to its success with the public. I put the work on its own merits, quite independent of names; and Wright agrees with me. I gave them the theory of my new journal; the hopes it must meet, the audience it must create, the contributors it must secure. I proposed that it should answer to something like this: 'The Janus: An Ephemeris of the Permanent in Religion, Philosophy, Science, Art, and Letters.' My idea was obviously too broad and daring for them, and so we separated. Two letters from my wife at the close of this stormful day. I read them, and found peace in the gardens of Concordia."

Nearly twenty years later, Mr. Alcott's project of an international magazine was carried out in some degree by the establishment of the "Atlantic Monthly." With Carlyle, to whom Emerson sent him with warm commendatory letters, Mr. Alcott had no good fortune. The two friends of Emerson proved antipathetic to each other. In a letter to Mrs. Alcott her husband wrote, June 25, 1842:

"I rode to Chelsea and passed an hour with Carlyle. Ah, me! Saul among the prophets! It must have

been a dark hour with him. He seemed impatient of interruption; faithless, quite, in all social reforms. His wit was sombre, severe, hopeless; his very merriment had madness in it; his humor was tragic even to tears. There lay smouldering in him a whole French Revolution, a Cromwellian rebellion; nor could the rich mellowness of his voice, deepened as it was and made more musical by his broad Northern accent, hide from me the restless melancholy, the memory feeding on hope, the decease of all prophecy in the grave of history. I told him the dead only dealt with the dead; that the living breathed only with the living. The man is sick; he needs rest. I know his ailment; I know its cure. Emerson will sadden when you tell him what I write; but here is another of the thousand confirmations of that suicide by the pen in which literature abounds. I will not turn on my heel to see another man; and the women are tragic all (Mrs. Carlyle, Mrs. Fox, etc.): these doleful daughters of Britain, they mourn even in their joys.

“*August 2.* I have seen Carlyle once more; but we quarrelled outright, and I shall not see him again. Greatness abides not here; her home is in the clouds, save when she descends on the meadows or treads the groves of Concord.”

Nevertheless, Alcott did call once more on Carlyle, but he was not at home. A few days after, he wrote this letter to Alcott:—

CHELSEA, Sept. 22, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR, — I am very sorry to have been out the other day when you called again. I suppose it is my last chance of seeing you in England. You leave me, too, as an incorrigible heretic and infidel; which verily I am not, yet must be content to seem for the present! Well, I will wish you a right pleasant reunion with your native friends, with those whom you know better than you do me. To hear that your scheme of life prospers to the utmost possible extent will, you may depend upon it, be always happy news to me. Though not precisely my church, I do reckon it a branch of the true Church, very worthy to spread and root itself according to its power in a world so overgrown with falsity and jungle as ours is. . . . I was absent in Suffolk when your invitation to the Conference reached me. I can add no more but that sad word, adieu! May all good Powers watch over you, guide you well, and ever better towards your true aim. I remain always

Yours very sincerely,

T. CARLYLE.

Although this letter is civil enough, Carlyle hardly treated Emerson's most intimate American friend with civility in their actual intercourse, and Emerson was greatly disappointed thereat. He had commended him (Feb. 28, 1842) to Carlyle, "hoping to atone, by his great nature, for many smaller ones that have craved to see you."

Carlyle replied with one of those sketches in which truth contends with exaggeration:—

“Directly about the time of Sterling’s departure came Alcott, some two weeks after I had heard of his arrival on these shores. He has been twice here, at considerable length; the second time, all night. He is a genial, innocent, simple-hearted man, of much natural intelligence and goodness, with an air of rusticity, veracity, and dignity withal, which in many ways appeals to one. The good Alcott; with his long, lean face and figure, with his gray worn temples and mild radiant eyes; all bent on saving the world by a return to acorns and the golden age: he comes before one like a venerable Don Quixote, whom nobody can laugh at without loving.”¹

There was a story current at the time and for years afterward, which certainly had some foundation,—that as Carlyle was walking with Alcott through the fine districts of London, where material wealth and the privileges of caste are so brilliantly displayed, he broke out: “Do ye see this, mon? This has stood for a thousand years, and will stand when you and your dom’d Potato Gospel have gone to the dogs.” In his reply to Carlyle, Emerson said:—

“Alcott is a great man, and was made for what is greatest; but I now fear that he has already touched

¹ “He had a face like a benediction,” said Cervantes.

what best he can, and through his more than prophet's egotism, and the absence of all useful reconciling talents, will bring nothing to pass, and be but a voice in the wilderness. As you do not seem to have seen him in his pure and noble intellect, I fear that it lies under some new and denser clouds."

This suspicion Emerson saw reason to change, ere he wrote the long article on "English Reformers," in the "Dial" for 1842. He there quotes from an esoteric report of a meeting held at H. C. Wright's Alcott House School, July 6, 1842, by the "friends to human progress," at which "the chair was taken at three o'clock, and again at seven, by A. Bronson Alcott, Esq., now on a visit from America." This report seems to have come from Charles Lane, and its statements are interesting:—

"There were some sixteen or twenty of us assembled on the lawn at the back of the house. We came from many places; one a hundred and fifty miles, another a hundred; others from various distances; and our brother Bronson Alcott from Concord, North America. We found it not easy to propose a question sufficiently comprehensive to unfold the whole of the fact with which our bosoms labored. We aimed at nothing less than to speak of the instauration of Spirit, and its incarnation in a beautiful form. We had no chairman, and needed none. We came not to dispute, but to

hear and to speak. And when a word failed in extent of meaning, we loaded the word with new meaning. The word did not confine our experience, but from our own being we gave significance to the word. Into one body we infused many lives, and it shone as the image of divine or angelic or human thought. For a word is a Proteus that means to a man what the man is."

This quaint description of the Alcott House vocabularies might be taken along with us while seeking to interpret much that was written in this Transcendental period, and is especially needful in reading what Alcott *wrote*,—when he *spoke* at his best, it was different. His own speeches at this gathering in Surrey indicate how fast he was approaching that culminating point of his idealism when he separated himself from all existing institutions, and, acting in the spirit of love, carried individualism to its extreme. He said at Alcott House:—

"Human institutions bear no fruit; if you plant them, they will yield nothing. Divine prohibitions and commands now stand for nothing. 'Thou shalt not kill,' which is a history recording to sense what the divine law of purity suggests in every unperverted heart, is held binding by none. 'What shall I not kill?' asks the butcher, the poulterer, the fishmonger; and he answers, 'All things in which I do not trade.' And what shall the soldier not kill? All men, except

his enemies. These exceptions make the law nugatory. The command is universal only for the pure soul, that neither stabs nor strangles. The laws of man inculcate and command slaughter. Nor will they exculpate rebellion on the ground that holiness has rendered obedience impossible. But we must ignore laws which ignore holiness. Our trust is in purity, not in vengeance. . . . Together with pure beings will come pure habits. A better body shall be built up from the orchard and the garden. The outward frame shall beam with soul. It shall be a vital fact in which is typically unfolded the whole of perfectness. As he who seizes on civil liberty with the hand of violence would act the tyrant if power were entrusted to him, so he whose food is obtained by force or fraud would accomplish other purposes by similar ignoble means. Tyranny and domination must be overcome when they first take root in the lust of unhallowed things. From the fountain we will slake our thirst, and our appetite shall find supply in the delicious abundance that Pomona offers. Flesh and blood we will reject as 'the accursed thing.' A pure mind has no faith in them."

Here was indicated the current of thought that broke forth in the No-Government theories of 1843, which led to Alcott's arrest by the deputy-sheriff of Concord, Sam Staples, and to his removal to the expected Paradise of Fruitlands in the town of Harvard the same year. He returned from England in October, 1842, bringing with

him, to reside at the Hosmer Cottage the next winter, Charles Lane and his son William, and Henry C. Wright, who had left his school at Alcott House, proposing to select a spot, as these English friends said,—

“Whereon the new Eden may be planted, and man may, untempted by evil, dwell in harmony with his Creator, with himself, his fellows, and all external natures. On a survey of the present civilized world, Providence seems to have ordained the United States of America, more especially New England, as the field wherein this idea is to be realized in actual experience.”

The Fruitlands failure was this *Paradise Lost*. Hawthorne was now living in Concord (since July, 1842), and this winter of 1842-1843 wrote his “Hall of Fantasy,” in which he said:—

“Here also was Mr. Alcott, with two or three friends, whom his spirit had assimilated to itself, and drawn to his New England home, though an ocean rolled between. There was no man in the enchanted Hall whose mere presence, the language of whose look and manner, brought such an impression as this mystic innovator; so calm and gentle was he, so holy in aspect, so quiet in the utterance of what his soul brooded over, that one might readily conceive his Orphic Sayings to well up from a fountain in his breast which communicated with the infinite Abyss of Thought. ‘Here is a prophet,’ cried my friend, with enthusiasm, — ‘a

dreamer, a bodiless idea amid our actual existence. Another age may recognize him as a man; or perhaps his misty apparition may vanish into sunshine. It matters little; for his influence will have impregnated the atmosphere, and will be imbibed by generations that know not the original apostle of the ideas which they shall shape into earthly business. Such a spirit cannot pass through human life, yet leave mankind entirely as he found them.' 'At all events, he may count you as a disciple,' said I, smiling; 'and doubtless there is the spirit of a system in him, if not the body of it.'"

This portrait by Hawthorne, so skilful in drawing what his friend Channing called

"A brief appearance without lines,"

will serve to describe the Alcott of Fruitlands; while his attitude towards government and all the institutions of society had been a little earlier portrayed by Emerson:—

"The State and the Church guard their purlieus with a jealous decorum. But their foundation is not numbers or force, but character. Character is the true theocracy; it will one day suffice for the government of the world. The fight of Leonidas, the hemlock of Socrates, the cross of Christ, is not a personal sacrifice for others, but fulfils a high necessity of his proper character: the benefit to others is merely contingent. . . . I do not call to mind a single human being

who has steadily denied the authority of the laws, on the simple ground of his own moral nature. Such designs, full of genius and full of fate as they are, are not entertained except avowedly as air-pictures. If the individual who exhibits them dare to think them practicable, he disgusts scholars and churchmen; and men of talent and women of superior sentiment cannot hide their contempt. Not the less does nature continue to fill the heart of youth with suggestions of this enthusiasm; and there are now men — if indeed I can speak in the plural number — more exactly I will say I have just been conversing with one man — to whom no weight of adverse experience will make it for a moment appear impossible that thousands of human beings might exercise towards each other the grandest and simplest sentiments, — as well as a knot of friends or a pair of lovers.¹ . . . My quarrel with poets is that

¹ The first part of this quotation is taken from Emerson's lecture on "Politics," first given in 1839, and never published in full, I believe. Mr. Alcott had copied this passage into his diary as far as to the first ellipsis. What then follows is from the little manuscript book of Mr. Emerson, in which he made preparation for a biography of Alcott, in case he should survive him. Emerson was in the habit of saying to his friends, "I have always wished that I might outlive Mr. Alcott, in order that I might give his good things to the world; for I am sure that if I should do so now, he would disown them. When at his best, Mr. Alcott said more good things than any man I have ever known. Whoever writes his life will have to come to my papers." I have drawn freely on this invaluable source of fact and comment in the chapters which follow. It was Emerson's opinion, and it

they do not believe in their own poetry. But Alcott is a poet, the only one in this country ; he believes in his images ; he exists to see and multiply them, and translate by them evermore history, natural and civil, and all men and events into laws. His relation to things and to men is always poetical. . . . In Plato's ' Republic ' (Book Third) there is a sentence which might be an introduction to a biography of Alcott: ' We must seek for those who are to supply us with the forms of art, — men who by instinct can trace out the springs of grace and beauty, — that, dwelling as in a sanctuary of health, the young may imbibe good from all around them, from every work and sight and sound, whence aught may strike their sense, like airs that are wafting health from purest climes, and step by step, from child-

was the fact, that Alcott revealed himself more fully to him than to any other person ; and he was fond of drawing out the inspiration which he was sure to gain from this source. He quotes from Mirabeau the apt saying, " I can't deny myself the pleasure of rubbing the head (*frotter la tête la plus électrique*) which gives out more electric sparks than any I ever knew," — applying this to himself and Alcott. In 1857, after knowing Alcott twenty-two years, he said : " He is good as a lens, a mirror, a beautiful susceptibility, every impression on which is to be accounted for, and, until accounted for, registered as an addition to our catalogue of natural facts. It needs one acquainted with the lens by frequent use to make allowance for defects, — but 't is the best instrument I ever met with." The extract from Hawthorne's " Hall of Fantasy " is taken, not from the paper as it stands in his volume, but from Lowell's short-lived magazine, " The Pioneer," in the spring of 1843.

hood, are changing them into the image of goodness, and into likeness and love and harmony with the beauty of truth.' . . . Alcott astonishes by the grandeur of his angle of vision, and the heaps of particulars. I tell him he is the Bonaparte of speculators, born to rout the Austrians of the soul. But his day-labor has a certain emblematic air, like the annual ploughing of the Emperor of China."

The winter following Alcott's return from England was one of glorious vision and still advancing individualism. Lane and Wright added something to the interest, and much to the labors, of the family household at the cottage, where Lane played the violin and in other ways furnished an element of English culture by which the daughters profited. Wright, with his keener sensibility, was quicker in discovering the lack of practical faculty in Alcott's nature than was the more prosaic commercial man from Maiden Lane; and in England, some years later, said to Emerson, "He is impracticable," to which Emerson replied:—

"Yes, impracticable as our thoughts are. You will reply that it will not do to say our thoughts are quite impracticable, — nor do I think that any man is quite impracticable. I do not feel at liberty to decline the thoughts or the men that go by, because they are not quite easy to deal with, and conformable to the opin-

ions of the Boston 'Post.' . . . Alcott is a tedious arch-angel. How few have faith enough to treat a man of genius as an exiled prince of the blood who must presently come to his own ; and it will then appear that it had been best to have been of the same household all the time."¹

Henry Thoreau, who was then living in Emerson's family, was sometimes vexed by this impracticability and tedium in Alcott, although he steadily came back to a high respect for him. In a letter to Emerson (Jan. 24, 1843) he makes allusion to Lane and Alcott, and to the arrest of the latter for refusing to pay taxes,—on the ground that he would not support a government so false to the law of love as that which the Boston "Post" advocated. He said:—

"Mr. Alcott has not altered much since you left. I think you will find him much the same sort of person. With Mr. Lane I have had one regular chat *à la* George Minott, which, of course, was greatly to our mutual grati- and edi-fication ; and as two or three as regular

¹ The latter part of this quotation was not said to Mr. Wright, but is found in Emerson's journal for 1840. The whole passage expresses the constant sentiment of Emerson toward his friend, although he liked to let his humor play about the subject, and quoted a Bostonian who heard Alcott and Lane at the Marlborough Chapel as saying, "It was like going to heaven in a swing."

conversations have taken place since, I fear there may have been a precession of the equinoxes. Mr. Wright, according to the last accounts, is in Lynn, with uncertain aims and prospects, — maturing slowly, perhaps, as indeed are all of us. I suppose they have told you how near Mr. Alcott went to the jail, but I can add a good anecdote to the rest. When Staples came to collect Mrs. Ward's taxes, my sister Helen asked him what he thought Mr. Alcott meant, — what his idea was, — and he answered, 'I vum, I believe it was nothing but principle, for I never heard a man talk honest.'

"There was a lecture on Peace by a Mr. Spear (ought he not to be beaten into a ploughshare?) the same evening, and as the gentlemen (Lane and Alcott) dined at our house while the matter was in suspense, — that is, while the constable was waiting for his receipt from the jailer, — we there settled it that we (that is, Lane and myself perhaps) should agitate the State while Winkelried lay in durance. But when over the audience I saw our hero's head moving in the free air of the Universalist church, my fire all went out, and the State was safe as far as I was concerned. But Lane, it seems, had cogitated and even written on the matter in the afternoon, and so, out of courtesy, taking his point of departure from the Spearman's lecture, he drove gracefully *in medias res*, and gave the affair a very good setting out; but, to spoil all, our martyr very characteristically, but, as artists would say, *in bad taste*, brought up the rear with a

‘My Prisons,’ which made us forget Silvio Pellico himself.”¹

Charles Lane was at this time writing for the “Dial” an article on Alcott, which appeared in 1843, and of which Thoreau said, when editing it: “It is far better than any notice Mr. Alcott has received, or is likely to receive, from another quarter,— it is the other side, which Boston needs to hear.” In the original manuscript Lane said:

“Goethe in his Fatherland earns a moderate respect, while in America he is placed on the pinnacle of renown. Carlyle, in his native England, coldly and slowly admitted to the ranks of genius, in America is kindly regarded as one of the brightest stars in the literary horizon. To Emerson, in his own circle, is but slowly accorded a worthy response; and Alcott, almost utterly neglected by contemporaries, must seek his truer appreciation beyond the great waters, and in the quietest nook in old England behold the first substantial admission of his claim to be considered the exponent of a divinely inspired idea. New England, failing in honor to her children, and having no newer and more youthful country to accept and reflect their merits, may receive the award of the old land.”

¹ This passage and that describing the conversation at Mrs. Emerson’s are from the “Atlantic Monthly” of May, 1892; and some portions of them had already appeared in Mr. Salt’s English Life of Thoreau.

There was truth and point in this remark; but it is the certificate of all prophets to be without honor in their own country. Five years later, Emerson wrote of him in his journal: "In the Alcott fluid men of a certain nature can expand and swim at large, such as elsewhere found themselves confined. Of course, Alcott seems to such the only great and wise man. He gives them nothing but themselves. But when they meet critics and practical men, and are asked concerning his wisdom, they have no books to show, no dogmas to impart, no sentences or sayings to repeat, and they find it quite impossible to communicate to these their good opinion. Me he has served now these twelve years in that way. He was the reasonable creature to speak to, that I wanted."

In February, 1843, Mr. Alcott, who had been holding conversations at Concord, Lexington, Boston, Lynn, and elsewhere since 1837, gave one at the house of Mrs. Emerson, during her husband's absence in New York; to whom she gave a lively sketch of it, introducing Charles Lane and Henry Thoreau, and pointing to a phase in Mr. Alcott's "metachemistry," as he and Emerson sometimes called his system of philosophy), which may here be cited:—

"Last evening we had the 'Conversation,' though, owing to the bad weather, but few attended. The sub-

jects were: What is Prophecy? Who is a Prophet? and The Love of Nature. Mr. Lane decided, as for all time and the race, that this same love of Nature—of which Henry was the champion, and Elizabeth Hoar and Lidian (though L. disclaimed possessing it herself) his faithful squires— that this love was the most subtle and dangerous of sins; a refined idolatry, much more to be dreaded than gross wickednesses, because the gross sinner would be alarmed by the depth of his degradation, and come up from it in terror, but the unhappy idolaters of Nature were deceived by the refined quality of their sin, and would be the last to enter the kingdom. Henry frankly affirmed to both the wise men that they were wholly deficient in the faculty in question, and therefore could not judge of it. And Mr. Alcott as frankly answered that it was because they went beyond the mere material objects, and were filled with spiritual love and perception (as Mr. T. was not), that they seemed to Mr. Thoreau not to appreciate outward Nature. I am very heavy, and have spoiled a most excellent story. I have given you no idea of the scene, which was ineffably comic, though it made no laugh at the time; I scarcely laughed at it myself,— too deeply amused to give the usual sign."

Returning to Concord in the spring, while Thoreau left it to live for a few months in the neighborhood of New York, Emerson wrote to him there concerning the proposed Paradise of his revolutionary friends, in the little town,

where Emerson's father was first settled as a parish minister, Harvard, in the county of Worcester. Writing June 10, 1843, he said:—

“From Mr. Alcott and Mr. Lane, at Harvard, we have yet heard nothing. They went away in good spirits, having sent ‘Wood Abram’ and Larned and William Lane before them, with horse and plough, a few days in advance, to begin the spring work. Mr. Lane paid me a long visit, in which he was more than I had ever known him gentle and open; and it was impossible not to sympathize with and honor projects that so often seem without feet or hands. They have near a hundred acres of land which they do not want, and no house, which they want first of all. But they count this an advantage, as it gives them the occasion they so much desire, of building after their own idea. In the event of their attracting to their company a carpenter or two, which is not impossible, it would be a great pleasure to see their building, which could hardly fail to be new and beautiful. They have fifteen acres of woodland, with good timber.”

But the story of Fruitlands must be reserved for another chapter. Speaking of Father Taylor (that eloquent sailor from Virginia, who taught religion to Boston for so many years), and of this Connecticut clockmaker, whose dial marked few hours save the serene ones, Emerson said,—

“Alcott and Edward Taylor, — one is the fool of his idea, and the other of his fancy. Alcott never learned

in Connecticut or in Boston what he sees and declares to me ; and at times his face and manners are sublime. A little English finish and articulation added to his potencies, and he would have compared with the greatest. His *bonhomie* and sympathy might have made him servile but for his exacting ideal, which makes the rich proprietors and their belongings very commonplace. With his hatred of labor and his commanding contemplation, a haughty beneficiary, Alcott makes good to the nineteenth century Simeon the Stylite, the Thebais, and the first Capuchins."

With these high, unpractical qualities Alcott set forth for Fruitlands.

END OF VOL. I.



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